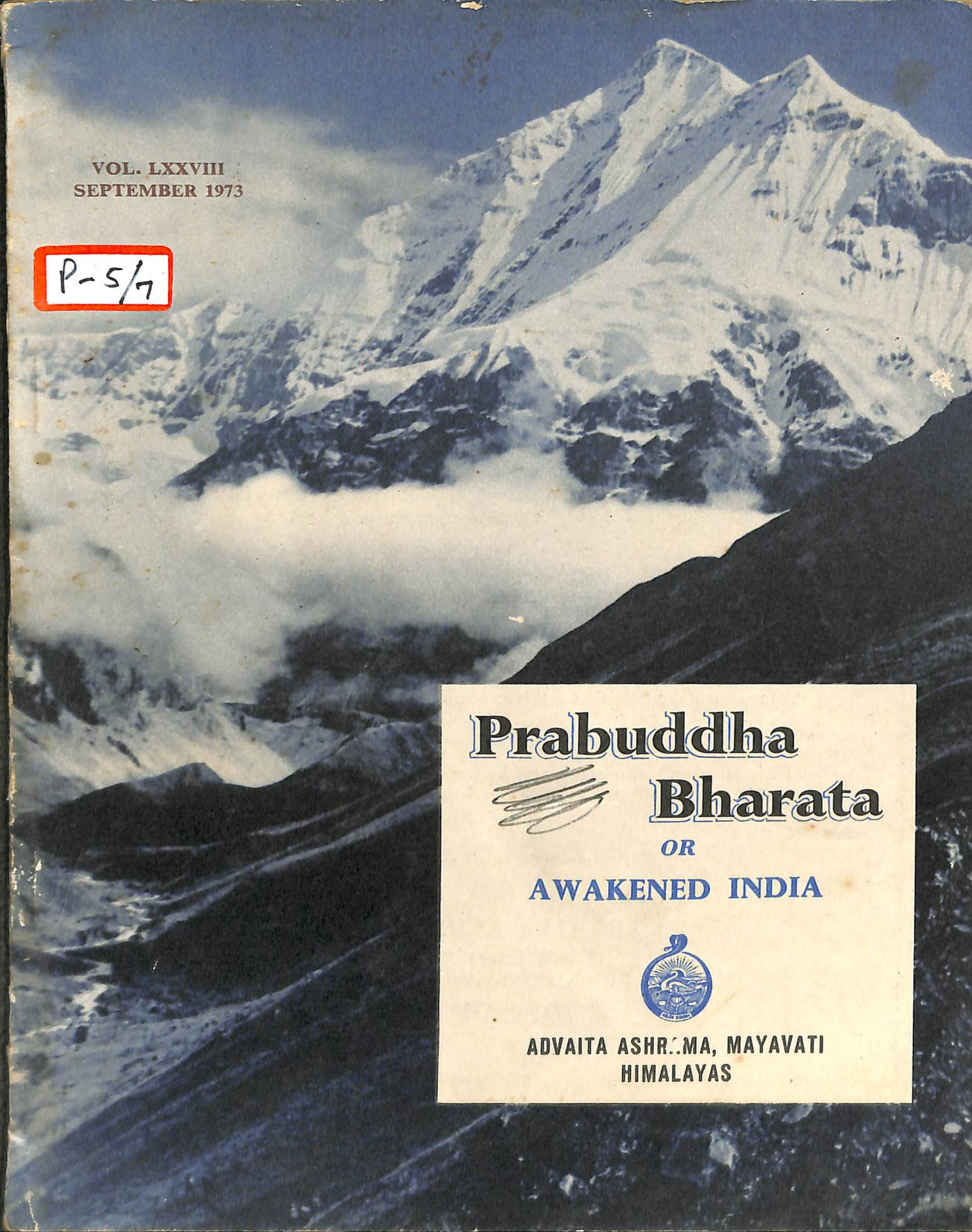


VOL. LXXVIII
SEPTEMBER 1973

Prabuddha Bharata

OR

AWAKENED INDIA

ADVAITA ASHR..MA, MAYAVATI
HIMALAYAS

Prabuddha Bharata

Started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

A MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE RAMAKRISHNA ORDER

SEPTEMBER 1973

Editorial Office
P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dt. Pithoragarh, U.P.

Publication Office
5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700-014
Phone: 44-2898

Annual Subscription

India, Nepal, Bangladesh, & Sri Lanka	Rs 8
U.S.A.	$ 4.00
Other Countries	£ 1.00

Life Subscription

Rs 150 $ 100 £ 20

Single Copy

75 P. 35 cents. 10 P.

CONTENTS

***Cover*:**
Chauren Himal, Central Himalayas, Nepal.

Information for subscribers, contributors and publishers overleaf.

INFORMATION FOR

CONTRIBUTORS

1. Unpublished original articles of universal and higher human interests pertaining to Religion, Philosophy and Culture coming from competent writers of any country are considered for publication in *Prabuddha Bharata.*

2. Articles should preferably be of medium size, typed double space on one side, not exceeding 4000 words. Paucity of space precludes acceptance of longer articles for publication, except in rare cases.

   Hand-written manuscripts are not normally considered for publication for obvious reasons.

3. The Editor is not responsible for opinions expressed in signed articles.

4. For all quotations in articles adequate references—including names of authors, publications, publishers with address, year of publication, and page number —should be provided.

6. Articles, not accepted for publication are not returned, unless so requested by contributors and adequate stamps for the purpose enclosed.

Please address all correspondence to :

THE EDITOR
PRABUDDHA BHARATA
P.O. Mayavati, Via Lohaghat
Dist. Pithoragarh, U.P.

SUBSCRIBERS

1. *Prabuddha Bharata* is a monthly Journal of the Ramakrishna Order. Intending subscribers can enrol themselves from January or July. Back numbers will be supplied. Only annual subscription is accepted.

2. Remittances may be made by money order, postal order, or bank draft. Foreign subscribers may remit through International Money Order, or Bank Draft, crossed 'A/c Payee' in favour of *Prabuddha Bharata, Calcutta* and sent by Registered Post to avoid theft. Necessary amount for Bank Commission should be added in case of out-station cheques.

3. Please intimate change of address for three months or more before the 20th of the preceding month. For shorter periods, arrangements should be made with the local post office.

4. *Prabuddha Bharata* is always posted in the first week of every month. Complaints of non-receipt may kindly be made during the last week of the month.

5. A concession of 5% will be allowed on some of the publications of Advaita Ashrama to subscribers of *Prabuddha Bharata.*

6. Please quote your subscriber number in all correspondence.

Please address all business correspondence to :

THE MANAGER
PRABUDDHA BHARATA
5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta 700-014

A REQUEST TO PUBLISHERS

Books are reviewed in our columns by competent scholars. Normally, we review English publications only.

Publishers are requested to send *two copies* of *only* new publications to facilitate early attention.

New Publication !

Can One Be Scientific And Yet Spiritual ?

By Swami Budhananda

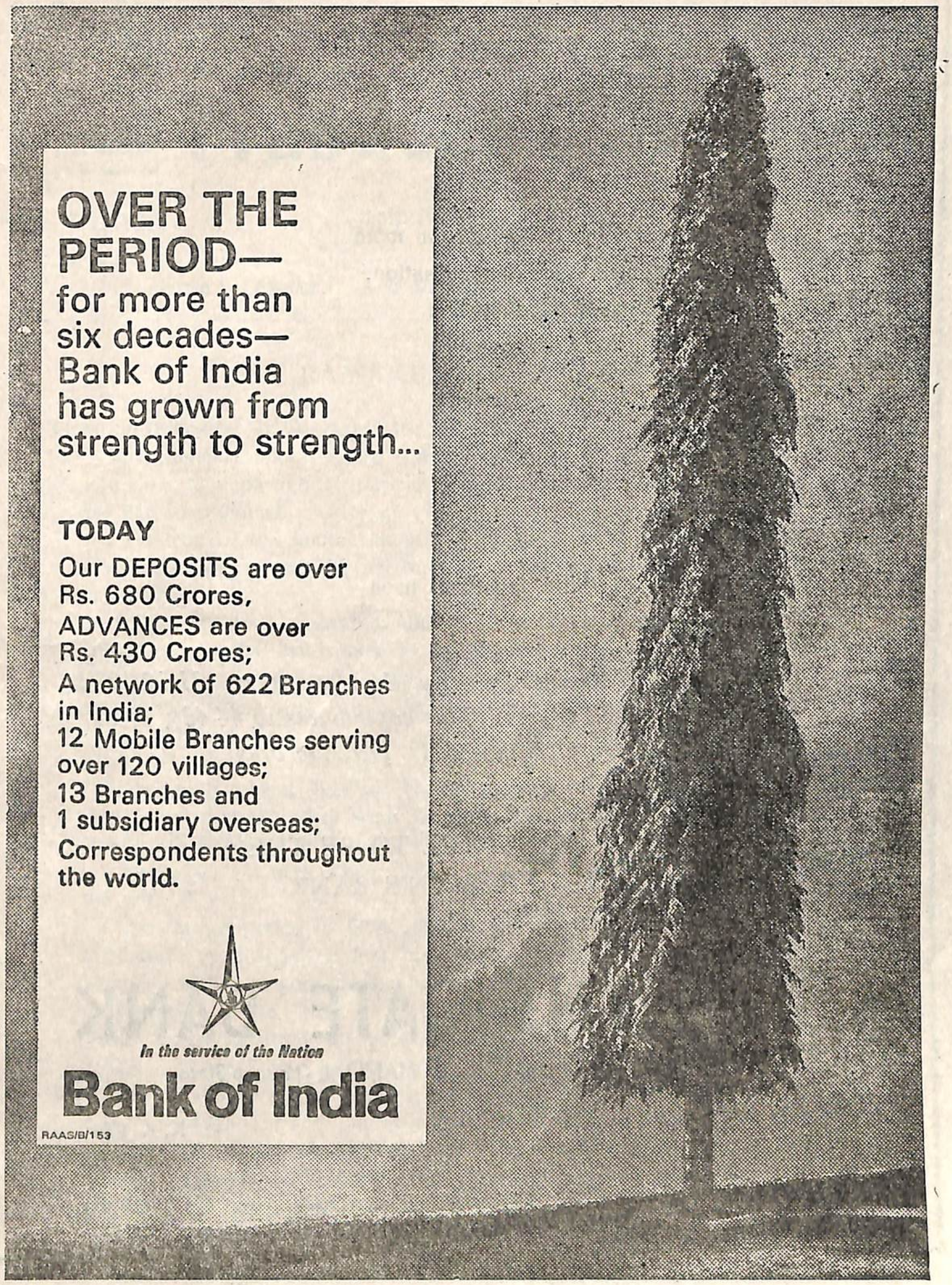
Man's future largely depends on the possibility of his becoming trully scientific and trully spiritual in one. Is it possible ?

How it is possible and why it is necessary are explained in this book.

Price : 2.00

Page : 126

ADVAITA ASHRAMA
5 Dehi Entally Road
Calcutta - 14


OVER THE PERIOD—
for more than
six decades—
Bank of India
has grown from
strength to strength...
TODAY
Our DEPOSITS are over
Rs. 680 Crores,
ADVANCES are over
Rs. 430 Crores;
A network of 622 Branches
in India;
12 Mobile Branches serving
over 120 villages;
13 Branches and
1 subsidiary overseas;
Correspondents throughout
the world.
In the service of the Nation
Bank of India
RAAS/B/153

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत

Prabuddha Bharata

VOL. LXXVIII SEPTEMBER 1973 No. 9

Arise ! Awake ! And stop not till the Goal is reached.

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ANSWERS

Question (asked by Dr. Sarkar): 'But is it ever possible to get rid of all doubts ?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Learn from me as much as I have told you. But if you want to know more, you must pray to God in solitude. Ask Him why He has so ordained.

'The son of the house can give a beggar only a small measure of rice. But if the beggar asks for his train fare, then the master of the house must be called.

'Well, you love reasoning. All right. Let us reason a little. Listen. According to the jnani there is no Incarnation of God. Krishna said to Arjuna: "You speak of Me as an Incarnation of God. Let Me show you something. Come with Me." Arjuna had followed Sri Krishna a short distance, when Sri Krishna asked him, "What do you see there ?" Arjuna replied, "A big tree with black berries hanging in bunches." Krishna said, "Those are not black berries. Go nearer and look at them." Arjuna went nearer and saw that they were Krishnas hanging in bunches. "Do you see now", said Krishna, "how many Krishnas like Me have grown there ?"

'Kabirdas said of Krishna, "He danced like a monkey to the clapping of the gopis!"

'As you go nearer to God you see less and less of His upadhis, His attributes. A devotee at first may see the Deity as the ten-armed Divine Mother; when he goes nearer he sees Her possessed of six arms; still nearer, he sees the Deity as the two-armed Gopala. The nearer he comes to the Deity, the fewer attributes he sees. At last, when he comes into the presence of the Deity, he sees only Light without any attributes.

'Listen a little to the Vedantic reasoning. A magician came to a king to show his magic. When the magician moved away a little, the king saw a rider on horseback approaching him. He was brilliantly arrayed and had various weapons in his hands. The king and the audience began to reason out what was real in the phenomenon before them. Evidently the horse was not real, nor the robes, nor the armour. At last they found out beyond the

shadow of a doubt that the rider alone was there. The significance of this is that Brahman alone is real and the world unreal. Nothing whatsoever remains if you analyze.'

Doctor: 'I don't object to this.'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'But it is not easy to get rid of illusion. It lingers even after the attainment of Knowledge. A man dreamt of a tiger. Then he woke up and his dream vanished. But his heart continued to palpitate.

'Some thieves came to a field. A straw figure resembling a man had been put there to frighten intruders. The thieves were scared by the figure and could not persuade themselves to enter the field. One of them, however, approached and found that it was only a figure made of straw. He came back to his companions and said, "There is nothing to be afraid of." But still they refused to go; they said that their hearts were beating fast. Then the daring thief laid the figure on the ground and said, "It is nothing, it is nothing." This is the process of "Neti, neti".'

Question (asked by Shyam Basu): 'What remains with a man when he goes beyond jnana and ajnana, knowledge and ignorance?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'It is vijnana, special Knowledge of God. To know many things is ignorance. To know that God dwells in all beings is knowledge. And what is vijnana? It is to know God in a special manner, to converse with Him and feel Him to be one's own relative.

'To know that there is fire in wood is knowledge. But to make a fire with that wood, cook food with that fire, and become healthy and strong from that food is vijnana.'

Shyam: 'And about the thorn?'

Sri Ramakrishna: 'Yes. When the thorn gets into the sole of your foot, you procure a second thorn. After taking out the first thorn with the help of the second, you throw both thorns away. Likewise, you should procure the thorn of knowledge in order to remove the thorn of ignorance. After destroying igonorance, you should discard both knowledge and ignorance. Then you attain vijnana.'

ONWARD FOR EVER!

'Imagination is the gilded shadow of truth,' says the poet. The internal universe, the Real, is infinitely greater than the external one, which is but the shadowy projection of the true one. When we see the 'rope' we do not see the 'serpent' and when the 'serpent' is, the 'rope' is not. Both cannot exist at the same time; so while we see the world we do not realise the Self, it is only an intellectual concept. In the realisation of Brahman, the personal 'I' and all sense of the world is lost. The Light does not know the darkness, because it has no existence in the light; so Brahman is all. While we recognise a God, it is really only the Self that we have separated from ourselves and worship as outside of us; but all the time it is our own true Self, the one and only God. The nature of the brute is to remain where he is, of man to seek good and avoid evil, of God to neither seek nor avoid, but just to be blissful eternally. Let us be Gods, let us make our hearts like an ocean, to go beyond all the trifles of the world and see it only as a picture. We can then enjoy it without being in any way affected by it. Why look for good in the world, what can we find there? The best it has to offer is only as if children playing in a mud puddle found a few glass beads. They lose them again and have to begin the search anew. Infinite strength is religion and God. We are only souls if we are free, there is immortality only if we are free, there is God only if He is free.

Vivekananda

SENESCENCE AND SPIRITUAL LIFE

EDITORIAL

I

'What walks on four feet in the morning', the Sphinx used to ask the Theban travellers, 'on two at noon, and on three in the evening?' She killed all who failed to answer this riddle until Oedipus solved it by saying, 'Man crawls on all fours as a baby, walks upright in the prime of life, and uses a staff in old age.' What became of the She-monster and the son of Laius whose name is familiarized by Psychologist Freud, is not our concern. A great fact of human life, likely to reign unaltered till the end of time, has been stated in the Sphinx's riddle and its solution. Man enters this earthly stage weeping, helpless, toothless, and similarly leaves it wailing, crawling, dependent.

Man generally does not complain about the inevitability of birth and growing into the prime of life. He would however fain avoid old age. That this cannot be done is strikingly pressed home in another Greek legend. Tithonus, a handsome prince of Troy and the son of Laomedon, was loved and married by the goddess Eos. By the prayers of his beloved Eos, Tithonus was granted by Zeus immortality. Unfortunately, Eos had forgotten to ask for eternal youth for Tithonus, and so he grew old and feeble but could not get release from the physical cage. He suffered immensely from this inconvenient boon until Eos finally changed him into a grasshopper. Not that the writer of this ancient legend could not have made Eos remember to combine in her request to Zeus, eternal youth with immortality. He wanted to teach men that physical immortality would be impracticable. And if made practicable, would turn out to be a vast unmitigated inconvenience, ending in an atavistic calamity.

Old age with all its attendant physical and mental infirmities—loss of musculo-skeletal

efficiency, decreased acuity of vision and hearing, more or less impairment of memory, and sometimes onset of senile psychoses—is a frightening prospect to most human beings. And time, the 'all-destroyer', is inexorable. 'Before our very eyes', says Śaṅkara in a hymn on Śiva, 'our life is perishing daily, youth is declining, and past days never return.' A Chinese poet expressed the slow but sure temporal erosion of human life, saying that the fountain of youth is a hoax; that no man can yet 'tie a string to the sun' and hold back its course. None can stop growing old, but there are many oldsters who would like to pretend that they are young.

Lord Horder, who was for many years the Royal physician in Britain, recounts with an inaudible cynical titter, the case of an old man who was proud of his physical fitness. Horder recorded:

> 'Then there was another who used to come to see me yearly on his birthday. There was never anything the matter, and it was an easy job for me. After telling me how well this organ worked and how fit another was, and so on, he used to conclude by saying, "Ah, doctor, but that's not the best: all my faculties unimpaired, eh what?" I shouted my congratulations, for he was very deaf, and the interview ended.'[1]

In Oriental countries, specially in India and China, ageing is generally accepted as an inevitable biological fact and old people are looked upon with consideration, love, and respect. But the Occidental civilizations have never become reconciled with senescence and generally consider old age as 'a kind of shameful secret'. Nowhere in the West is this attitude probably so pronounced as in the United States of America. Rightly have thoughtful writers blamed U.S.A. for the cult of youth and emotional immaturity. It is there, as Dr. C. G. Jung pointed out, almost an ideal 'for the father to be the brother of his sons, and for the mother if possible to be the younger sister of her daughter'![2] One may be a little amused to read that in recent days inmates of old people's homes and retirement villages in the U.S.A. are starting adolescent games of dating and love-making.[3] Man's mania for staying young could not possibly reach more ridiculous lengths. The penetrating observation of Dr. Alexis Carrel about such pseudo-young men, made over thirty-five years ago, seems even more true today:

> 'The pseudo-young men, who play tennis and dance as at twenty years, who discard their old wife and marry a young woman, are liable to softening of the brain, and to diseases of the heart and the kidneys. Sometimes they die suddenly in their beds, in their office, on the golf-links, at an age when their ancestors were still tilling their land or managing their business with a firm hand.'[4]

As the nations of the West are powerful, technologically advanced, and affluent, their cultural and social impact on the eastern peoples is noticeably great. 'All virtues take refuge in money!' exclaims satirically an old Sanskrit poet. So the social and cultural attitudes and mores of the wealthy West, looked upon as worthy of imitation, are gaining converts in the East. 'If the West worships youth and detests old age, we also should do the same'—seems to be the modern trend in the eastern societies. Hence it is that serious sociological problems and confusion of ideals and values, relating to

---

[1] *What Life Has Taught Me* (Ed. Sir James Merchant, Pub. by Odhams Press Ltd., Long Acre, London, 1948), p. 47.

[2] Dr. C. G. Jung: *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd., London, 1947), p. 126.

[3] *Time*, U.S.A., dated June 4, 1973.

[4] Dr. Alexis Carrel: *Man the Unknown* (Hamish Hamilton, London, 1937), p. 171.

old age and man's destiny on earth, are arising. A society that is trying to be alert and sane can neglect these problems only to the detriment of its health and cherished ideals.

Why the occidental civilizations should be so youth-adoring and life-clinging cannot be easily explained. Possibly the influence of Semitic religious teaching and of the Greek civilization—which tend to make much of this human life, this 'one' chance to be on earth—on the entire western unconscious, is the reason. Certainly it is one reason. In contrast to this, the eastern religions—mainly, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism—all teach that man's present life is only a link in a beginningless chain of rebirths. 'Even as the embodied Self passes', teaches Śrī Kṛṣṇa, in this body, through the stages of childhood, youth, and old age, so does It pass into another body. Calm souls are not bewildered by this.'[5] The stubborn refusal of the majority of westerners to acknowledge the development and evolution of man at the psychological and spiritual levels has led them into a sort of puerilism that makes them gloat over and imitate the youth. The East, instead of falling prey to this puerilism, should clear its vision of hollow infatuation and preserve the great heritage it has received from its religions and cultures. The West, on the other hand, should shed its puerilism and learn the truth that man has an immaterial essence lodged in him which finds a more suitable opportunity to grow and realize itself in the middle and old ages than in youth and adulthood. As the poet sang:

> 'I have climbed to the snows of Age and
> I gaze at a field of the Past,
> Where I sank with the body at times in
> the sloughs of a low desire,
> But I hear no yelp of the beast, and the
> man is quiet at last,
> As he stands on the heights of his life
> with a glimpse of a height that is
> higher.'[6]

II

Wrinkled skin and grey hair, wizened body and shaking limbs, sclerotic arteries and failing memory—all hall-marks of senescence—can at best be delayed, but never obviated, if one lives sufficiently long. Rejuvenation attempts, through grafting of monkey or chimpanzee glands to man, and such Tithonus gimmicks, are sure to continue, though not with the desired results. Physical immortality coupled with eternal youth will only remain a human dream, realizable according to mythologies, in celestial regions. In the meantime, proud modern man must learn to recognize and accept that ageing is an inevitable phenomenon of life in this space-time universe and that if he wants to liberate himself from nature's deadly talons, he must switch his identification from the physical body to his spiritual essence which stands ever outside the buffeting of the space-time anvil-hammer. He must also recognize that training, disciplining and controlling the mind is the means for attaining that spiritual identity. And this mental disciplining can be carried on by man without being hampered by the process of senescence.

It may not be out of context to recollect here a few salient facts about senescence. Ageing starts as soon as a child is born, but in the beginning it is not apparent. Different parts of man grow old at different rates. By the time he is thirty, his muscular strength, reaction time, and reproductive powers have all passed their peak. On the other hand, his mind is still young and growing at fifty. It is said that the brain does not reach its acme of development until sixty, though normally mental efficiency from then on declines very

5 *Bhagavad-gītā*, II. 13.

6 Rev. J. Tyssul Davis: *A Man's Religion* (C.W. Daniel Co., London, 1925), p. 62.

slowly.[7] 'It is when our physiological activities begin to weaken', observes Dr. Alexis Carrel, 'that our mind attains the summit of its development.'[8] Only with time will our insight, powers of judgement and reasoning, and perspective develop and mature. The true spirit of youth is entirely different from organic juvenility and emotional immaturity. An old person who tries to regress into adolescence, it can be said without fear of contradiction, has never emerged from that stage. 'Sclerosis', it appears, is more a matter of mental senescence than physical ageing, East or West.

Eminent philosophers and psychologists have long wondered why the cosmic scheme has left at man's disposal at least a third of his life after he has fulfilled nature's imperious demands on the biological level. Some among them have given bold hints that it could be for his psychological and spiritual progress. 'Money-making, social existence, family and posterity', writes Dr. Jung, 'are nothing but plain nature—not culture. Culture lies beyond the purpose of nature. Could by any chance culture be the meaning and purpose of the second half of life?'[9] What the distinguished psychologist here means by 'culture' is, to our understanding, man's psychological and spiritual development. Dr. Julian Huxley, in his *Uniqueness of Man,* has pointed out that we are the animal which is marked specifically by the strange characteristic, the unique feature, that only when our reproductive acme is over do we enter into our particular, outstanding way of life.[10] The 'particular, outstanding way of life' here spoken of is certainly at the creative, psychical level. This itself can be greatly self-fulfilling to many in their advanced years. But man must aspire to rise higher still, into moral excellence and spiritual radiance. These levels and ideals alone make fully meaningful the continued working of the springs of universal, creative energy in man in his so-called middle and declining years.

Nature has her hand at man's throat from the moment of his birth. She drives him on relentlessly with the spur and whip of impulses and desires, lusts and hungers, loves and hates, to serve her own primeval ends. From his first childhood to the second childhood, separated by three score years and more, man unwittingly remains a bond-slave of nature. Must he always come weeping and crawling into this world and leave it in the same manner, as nature's helpless servitor? Fortunately for humanity there have been men who have successfully rebelled against this soulless, mechanical existence imposed by instincts and impulses, thrown away forever the yoke of nature, and become illumined with the inner light. Such spiritual heroes declare: 'Remember the truth, "Not the soul for nature, but nature for the soul."' 'The only duty for anyone on this earth, man or woman, is realization of the majesty of the divine soul.' If in the first half of life the sun of human consciousness serves to light up external, material values, in the second half the declining sun should withdraw its light in order to illuminate itself. Therein lies the freedom of the soul, its inherent divine dignity. 'Fire is seen in the eyes of the young,' said Victor Hugo, 'but it is light that we see in the old man's eyes.' Simone de Beauvoir, the noted French authoress, calls these words of Hugo 'mystical twaddle' in her book *The Coming of Age.* For all we know, Victor Hugo may be perfectly right and Simone de Beauvoir, despite her discursive scholarship, entirely ignorant of

---

[7] *vide* George Lawton: 'Your Mind Can Keep You Young', *Reader's Digest* (Indian Edition), Oct. 1969.

[8] Dr. Alexis Carrel: op. cit., p. 164.

[9] Dr. C. G. Jung: op. cit., p. 126.

[10] *vide* Gerald Heard: 'Is Old Age Worth While?', *Vedanta for Modern Man* (Ed. by Christopher Isherwood, Harper & Brothers, New York, First edn.), p. 400.

a large arc of human life and possibilities.

III

A desirable scheme of life is one so conceived as to nurture and educate all of man's potentialities and to enable him to maintain a steady momentum of mental and spiritual evolution during every period of his life. The ancient Hindu scheme of life meets these requirements eminently. In the four *āśramas* or stages of life—those of the student, the married householder, the hermit, and the monk—governed by the all-embracing value-scheme of *dharma, artha, kāma,* and *mokṣa* (righteousness, wealth, fulfilment of desires, and spiritual liberation), a man is permitted to have his biological and social urges satisfied in the prime of life and is directed in the so-called declining years to intensely pursue the psychological and spiritual values. This pattern of life, let us remember, was applicable to all four castes of the Hindu society.

According to this plan, a man, on seeing signs of old age on his body, laid the family responsibilities on his grown-up sons and retired, with or without his wife, to the forest-colonies where many others in the third stage of life lived. Here he was to continue the Vedic rituals in their simplified form, study the Vedas, practise austerity, self-control and non-injury, and devote himself to contemplation of God. Thus as he advanced further in his detachment, self-control, and God-mindedness, he finally renounced everything and wandered off as a monk, his mind fixed firmly on God, rejoicing in the bliss within, and guided by Divine will and mercy.

It may not be possible, we admit, to follow literally this scheme of life in the present altered circumstances of time and society. But what has changed is outward circumstance and not the inner requirement. Even in these closing decades of the twentieth century, man's spiritul needs are the same as those of his ancestors. It is also true that, owing to advances in medicine, hygiene, and geriatrics, today's man is left with the possibility of a longer and healthier period of senescence. Because he does not seem to know how to make life spiritually meaningful, he tries to play the adolescent and fails hopelessly. A man grows old, even in these days, and perforce has to retire from active life. He may not go off to a forest-colony and live there wearing bark and eating fruits. The old Hindu scheme has a letter and a spirit. What is necessary today is its adoption in spirit. If we analyze the rules for the third stage of life, we come to a few essentials—namely simplicity in eating, dressing and living; worship and contemplation of God; scriptural study; self-control; non-injury; spirit of detachment; and seeing the divine presence in all.

There is a tendency in the modern outlook to magnify the financial problems of retired life. Seeking re-employment is possibly adding to the unemployment problem of the society on the one hand, and, on the other, postponing the inner encounter with oneself. A thoughtful man at the end of his active life should know that enough money is never acquired to supply all one's possible needs, and that the only way left is to minimize the latter. A man who cuts down on his needs gains independence, not only from the external 'tyrants' but also from the internal tyrants, namely, habits. Simplicity of life, will, to a great extent, reduce his financial stresses. If it seems necessary for him to take up or continue some work, then the work must be done as a service to his fellowmen, to God dwelling in them, without an eye to material gains or social approbation. Love, which till then had remained confined within the bounds of the little family, must flow forth to take in its vast embrace the whole human and subhuman creation. 'I have heard', wrote

Emerson, 'that whoever loves is in no condition old.' By loving and giving, a man salvages his mind and personality from the natural process of ageing. According to one medical authority, the psycho-dynamics of ageing reflects a change in the mental and physical processes of the 'giving goal-seeking expressive attitudes of maturity' gradually to the retentive, self-centered purposeless tendencies that result in introversion of psychic energy'.[11] Swami Vivekananda expressed this same idea very forcefully in one of his poems, originally in Bengali:

> 'Ay, born heir to the Infinite thou art,
> Within the heart is the ocean of Love,
> "Give," "Give away"—whoever asks return,
> His ocean dwindles down to a mere drop.'[12]

Not only should one not ask for return; one should not withhold either. The ocean—the psychic energy—will otherwise dry up and reduce one to moral and spiritual pauperage.

The virtues of simplicity, self-control, non-injury, love, charity, serenity, and God-mindedness that make the evening of life bright with an inner radiance and meaning, cannot be achieved by mere wishing. They cannot be 'extemporized', as Gerald Heard would say, in later life. They must be made the goal from early life—as the Hindu scheme prescribes—and an earnest effort maintained to make them a part of our character. The effort will never be in vain, as it has a strange, incomprehensible but irresistible energy that is in tune with cosmic power itself. 'All the good days behind him are sponsors', says Emerson, 'who speak for him when he is silent, pay for him when he has no money, introduce him where he has no letters, and work for him when he sleeps.' Such a life will be a symphony ending with a grand finale of serenity, peace, and spiritual contentment, and not with the 'crash of broken drum or cracked cymbals'.

IV

After the terrible carnage of the Kurukṣetra-war, Yudhiṣṭhira, eldest of the Pāṇḍava brothers, was overcome with remorse and dejection at the human destruction, especially of his near and dear ones. Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the friend and guide of the Pāṇḍava brothers, advised him to approach Bhīṣma—their grandsire, who was lying on the bed of arrows, waiting for the appropriate moment to give up his body—and place his doubts before him. 'He is the greatest of those who know the *dharmas*,' urged Śrī Kṛṣṇa, 'and when he is dead, the world will be like the night that has lost the moon. Therefore, taking hold of his feet in reverence, ask of him what is in your mind.' Yudhiṣṭhira, with his brothers, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and others then quickly rode to Kurukṣetra and arrived at the place where Bhīṣma was resting. Then Śrī Kṛṣṇa spoke on behalf of the group about Yudhiṣṭhira's sorrow and requested Bhīṣma to console him. Bhīṣma graciously complied, and the vast body of his luminous teaching is spread over the 'Śānti' and 'Anuśāna' *parvans* (books) of the Mahābhārata, the great epic. We are not however concerned here with Bhīṣma's teaching, but with the significant words he said to Śrī Kṛṣṇa in reply. Though he was old, severely wounded in the war, and waiting to die, Bhīṣma, said:

> 'Strengthened by contemplation upon you, I seem to have turned into a youth. O Kṛṣṇa, by your grace, I am competent to speak of what promotes welfare.'

Here is the secret for frustrating the tricks of time—contemplation and meditation on God, and prayer for His grace.

(*Continued on p. 377*)

---

[11] *vide* 'Second Childhood', *M.D. Pacific*, April 1973

[12] *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas) Vol. IV, (1962), p. 496.

LETTERS OF A SAINT

THE LORD MY REFUGE

Almora
6.5.1916

Dear——,

I am in receipt of your letter of 29th last, and have noted its contents.

I am extremely glad that you are feeling very well after reading my letter. Enthusiasm is indeed necessary. Moreover, inasmuch as you can feel that the Lord is your very own, and to the extent that you can see Him as very close to you, by so much will the miseries of *saṁsāra* (relative existence) be removed and you will be able to experience pure bliss and freedom. The Master used to say, 'The more you proceed towards the east, the more will the west be left behind.' If you can advance towards God, *saṁsāra* of its own accord will go away.

To be sure, He is within us; if we are able to keep our mental contact with Him, the purpose [of life] is served. He is the Self of our self, the Life of our life; it is only through His grace that we are alive and carry on the activities of life. Admittedly, He is above all else the object of our love. Unawareness of this fact is the cause of all our suffering. If we but know Him in this way, all suffering comes to an end. May the Lord grant that this attitude always remains awakened in your heart. If that happens, your life will become blessed. As if swearing by His own being, the Lord has said in the *Gītā*: Worship Me: this is the only essence. This world is ephemeral and the cause of misery. Once having come here, be devoted to Me alone, disregarding everything else. Thus you will attain salvation; otherwise there is no means of escape.

> 'Having come into this transitory, joyless world, worship Me.'
> 'Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me, bow down to Me. Having thus disciplined yourself, and regarding Me as the Supreme Goal, you will come to Me.'[1]
>
> 'O ignorant mind! Think of Rāma always;
> what is the good of hundreds of other thoughts?
> O tongue! Chant unceasingly the name of Rāma;
> what gain is there in vain meaningless talks?
> O ears! Hear the story of Rāma;
> what benefit do you get by listening to music, vocal and instrumental?
> O eyes! You behold everything as full of Ramā.
> And give up all else besides Rāma.'

My best wishes to you,

Yours,
SRI TURIYANANDA

अनित्यमसुखं लोकमिमं प्राप्य भजस्व माम् ॥
मन्मना भव मद्भक्तो मद्याजी मां नमस्कुरु ।
मामेवैष्यसि युक्त्वैवमात्मानं मत्परायणः ॥ *Bhagavad-gītā*, IX. 33-4

WHY WE ARE WHAT WE ARE

Swami Ashokananda

As many of you know, Vedānta says that the Self, or the true man, actually is and always has been of the nature of Divinity. In other words, man is perfect, infinite, omniscient, omnipotent, eternal. Yet our experience contradicts this statement—at least so we think—because we feel, rather, the opposite. We feel finite; we feel temporal, that is to say, subject to the conditions of time; we are born; we die. We cannot be said to be omniscient in any reasonable sense, for our knowledge is restricted, and more often than not it is tentative. As regards our powers, we know they are very limited indeed; even insentient nature seems to have greater power than we who are sentient beings. I should like to tell you how Indian sages explain this present state of the human soul, particularly from the standpoint of the Vedānta philosophy.

I

According to Indian philosophy, it is through the influence of māyā, which can be translated as the principle of ignorance or illusion, that man seems to have forgotten his divine nature. Māyā is a peculiar thing. We cannot deny its existence in our present state, because, as one of our philosophers has said, it is an ingredient of our present experience: ignorance is just there. Everyone feels that he knows very little, and it is almost an axiom with us that knowledge is hard to get, that it is easier for us to continue in falsehood and untruth than to find the truth about things. In the face of this almost universal experience, I think the statement that we are suffering from ignorance cannot be denied. Hindu philosophers have accepted this view; but they have also maintained that this cannot be our natural state. If ignorance were our natural state, it would follow that we could not, by any effort, arrive at the state of knowledge. If untruth were our nature, we could never become established in truth, because no one can forgo his own nature and remain himself. Yet many people in all ages have attained to knowledge and have become established in truth. Hindu philosophers have concluded, therefore, that this state of ignorance is unnatural. Swami Vivekananda called it a hypnotic state; he said we have been hypnotized into this condition of impotence and ignorance.

Now this element of ignorance called māyā has been thoroughly investigated and has been found to have the power of dynamism—that is to say, it does not remain static; it produces all kinds of things. Out of it the vast manifold universe has evolved. Māyā works its changes in two different ways: along one line it becomes objective; along a parallel line it produces within the individual souls a series of evolutes. On one side, the objective universe begins as a very fine, luminous, almost perfect manifestation of Divinity; it has been called causal because it is the first evolute, the first change brought about in māyā. From this state there is a gradual degeneration until we have this gross universe, which is very gross indeed. (As I have sometimes pointed out, there is probably a still grosser universe. Possessing the human consciousness that we do, we cannot be aware of it, but we can infer that such a thing is possible.) On the other side, the subjective side, there is also the first causal manifestation, which is a perfect state of the mind—pure intelligence. This is followed by other general phases of the mind; then comes the life-force, and then

the senses. You cannot say that these evolutes are altogether subjective. They are instrumental and are therefore partly objective, and yet in our present experience they are so mixed up with our selves that we probably would be content to call them at least partly subjective. We can say, then, that just as a gradual degeneration has taken place in the objective universe, so a gradual degeneration has taken place within the subjective: the mind has become more and more gross and more and more limited until we have our present state.

Even if we don't remember all this metaphysical background which I have just recounted to you in such brief form, many questions come to us. We continually ask questions about whatever we want to understand: we want to know its cause, or at least its previous history; we want to know what it is made of and what it is doing here; we also want to anticipate its future. All these are natural questions that proceed from the principle of reason, which seems to be a part of our consciousness. Such questions should be asked also in regard to ourselves: What purpose do we serve here? Why do we have to be here at all? Where have we come from? Where are we going from here? Why are we tied to a body—supposing the body to be different from ourselves? Why have we been born under circumstances which rarely anyone can call perfect? Why is our environment not what we want it to be? Why does our mind behave as it does? And why do we not possess talents and powers with which we could do much better than we are now doing? If we believe there is a God looking after us, the kindest thing we can say of Him is that He is a practical joker. But if this is a joke of His, it is really not a pleasant joke for us. And if we think He is serious about it, we do not know what epithet to give Him. For all these problems we have to have some explanation.

There have of course been philosophers, such as the Buddhists, who have not felt it necessary to bring God into the affairs of man; they have explained things without assuming the existence of a God. The Jains also have done that, and among the orthodox systems of Hinduism the Sāṅkhya philosophy has taught that everything can be explained without the assumption of a God. I think there is something wholesome about such an attitude. If you think God created the world and then created man and subjected him to all kinds of suffering, the plain fact remains, whatever arguments you might give, that He could have done better. After all, He is supposed to be good and kind; He is also supposed to be all-powerful, all-wise. He did not have to subject the souls to the conditions to which they seem to be subjected. Those who do not assume the existence of God may at least feel comfortable in this regard.

However that may be, questions arise regarding all the inequalities and sufferings and ignorances to which we seem to be subject, and I shall present to you the general views by which our philosophers explain them. In these explanations, let me emphasize the point that māyā does not function alone; behind it there is always the presence of the knowing soul—knowing and yet apparently self-forgetful. The whole process of creation and evolution is based on this self-forgetfulness. If you say it is very difficult to feel that such terrible consequences can follow from just a little bit of self-forgetfulness, which is no crime, I still say that this little bit of self-forgetfulness has produced such consequences. Even in our everyday experience we find that a little mistake can lead us astray and can produce disastrous results. And in dream experience we find it clearly demonstrated that our self-forgetfulness is the precondition of building up different situations for

ourselves. Unless we have forgotten ourselves in sleep, we cannot enter into our dream world. Our philosophers maintain, therefore, that ignorance has two powers: one is the power by which it covers, as it were, the consciousness of one's own true self; and the other is the power by which it projects another kind of consciousness in place of our real consciousness and another world in place of the real world. This should be remembered.

It should be further remembered that just as one may wake up from a dream even before the dream has come to a reasonable conclusion, so the soul can wake up from this terrible dream of relative existence any time it likes. Before a person falls asleep, he tells himself, 'I must get up at four o'clock.' If he can bury this thought in his consciousness, at the right time the thought will come up and waken him. Similarly, we can inject into our relative consciousness the thought of our own transcendental existence. This is called the practice of religion. When we practise religion we remind ourselves of our eternal status beyond this state of ignorance and bondage. If we do this we can make ourselves wake up from this world of relative existence any moment. The story of relative life does not have to be finished. As a matter of fact, the story has no end at all. It is somewhat like a soap opera—episode follows episode six days a week, and it never comes to an end. The soul never comes to a conclusion; the only thing it can do is to wake out of this dream. Many people think, 'We should finish enjoying the world; we should see things through. Then we shall seek God.' But, you see, there is no finishing this business at all. That the mind thinks such things is itself a part of this nonsensical dream, a by-product of relative existence. In fact, if you examine it, you will find the thought that something will end and then you will wake up is itself the basis of your ignorance. Therefore, as long as you hold that thought you will be tied to this relative existence and will never wake out of it.

However, the point I am making here is that you will not be able to understand the true import of Hindu teachings in connection with relative existence if you do not always bear in mind these background thoughts: that whatever is said of relative existence is true only as long as you remain forgetful of the ultimate truth of your own being and that at any time you can wake up. The finding of ultimate truth is not the result of some process; suddenly you come to it. Nor has our bondage been produced out of our freedom, or our ignorance out of our knowledge. Ignorance has come —or so it seems from our present viewpoint—but it has no origin, nor can it be explained causally; it is just there. We feel it and we suffer from the consequences of it, but it is just as tenuous, as weak, as frail as a dream; at any moment we can wake out of it. But as long as we are not awakened, we will see this terrible dream.

II

Let us see if there is any method within that dream. Here I must tell you about the laws of karma and reincarnation, because it is through these two doctrines that the Hindus explain the present condition of a person. (The deeper processes by which the independent, free soul has been reduced to this state of bondage or relative existence I won't go into now.) Let us just assume that I am what is called a *jīva*, or individual soul. That is to say, I am the free, independent Spirit, filled with all perfection, eternal and infinite in nature, but now I have, as it were, endowed myself with a mind and a body and I find myself a part of this vast universe, which is made up of the physical universe and of the mental universe in its finer and yet finer forms. I

find that I am subject to changes, and that I am born and shall die. As to what happens after death, the Hindus believe that when we die we go to a world for which we have fitted ourselves here by our own actions and experiences, and there we bide our time. Just as in our daily life we go to work and then come home and spend the night resting and preparing ourselves for another day of labour, so the souls dwell in those other worlds preparing for another existence similar to this, where they may go on with the job they are seeking to perform.

Now, what is it that the soul is trying to achieve here? Forgetting for the moment all the theological doctrines about the purpose of life that have been imposed on our minds by tradition, I think we can truly say that we are here to experience life and reality. Some of you probably would rather say that we are here to enjoy life, to enjoy reality, to enjoy the world. The trouble is that 'enjoy' is not an altogether honest description. 'Experience' would be better, for while some of our experiences bring enjoyment, others bring the opposite. But experience there is. Our search for knowledge, even our curiosity about things, is impelled by the desire to experience. Externally in the physical world, as well as internally, within ourselves, there seems to be no end to the realities we can experience. And this is what we are trying to do. We are trying to know ourselves; we are trying to find our own nature and our own mind; we are trying to extract the last drop of juice out of our own being; and we are trying to grab hold of everything on the outside that we can. That seems to be the general tendency of the soul.

Even from a philosophical point of view, I think that is a good description. The very fact that we seem to forget ourselves produces at once the sense of duality, poses the existence of the 'other'. If I, the Infinite One, forget myself, what will be the inevitable consequence? I shall begin to think myself finite. Of course, if I could forget myself entirely there would be nothing, but since the Self is all-consciousness it cannot be unconscious of itself altogether. All it can do is to bring about a twist in all-consciousness. That it does, and what happens is that it at once begins to think in terms of its opposite. The soul is infinite, but it begins to think of itself as finite. Yet it cannot forget its infinitude; so it has to think of another reality outside of itself which will give it the sense of a boundless reality. The soul is eternal, but when it forgets itself it at once produces the sense of time, the negation of eternity; yet, since eternity itself is endless, time also seems to be endless. The soul is unconditioned, uncaused, but, forgetting itself, it at once proposes conditions and causes, out of which come all kinds of forms and all kinds of laws and all the possibilities of change. So, you see, having denied ourselves, we yet cannot fully deny ourselves. By the recognition of the 'other', we have, as it were, made up a kind of artificial infinity, artificial eternity, artificial reality, and so on. The soul, not entirely forgetting its true nature, is continually running after what is called the 'other', that is to say, the objective world. And its experience can never come to an end: only when the illusion of duality departs and the soul becomes conscious that everything is already within itself, will its desire for experience stop.

Hindus sincerely believe that the soul has to go repeatedly through this process of life and death, incarnation and reincarnation. Because of its circular movement, this process has been called *saṁsāra-cakra*, the wheel of *saṁsāra* or transmigration. Here we are born with a body, we leave the body behind and go beyond life, and then we come back into life again. And so it goes on. The purpose of this incessant movement of the soul is, as I said, to become acquainted with

the whole of reality; as the soul experiences the phenomenal reality more and more, more and more, eventually a sense comes to it that what it has been seeking is not to be found in the outside but has to be perceived within. The soul begins to understand that to seek reality in the outside is to fall again and again into the same terrible error; it learns that the sense of finitude itself has to be completely abrogated before true experience can be had and that its highest experience is the experience of its identity with all that is. It senses that when that identity has been reached there will not be any necessity of reincarnation, any necessity of change, any mistakes, any suffering. The soul will rest in its own eternity and infinitude, its own omnipotence and omniscience. In other words, the soul will wake up from its dream.

Yes, that is bound to happen. Fortunately this which we are trying to experience is, as such, finite, and so it soon becomes possible for the soul to come to the conclusion that there is not very much to it. It is as if you had met a person who seemed so wonderful that you sought his acquaintance. You see him day after day, but after a month or a year has passed you find that he says the same things, does the same things; you have plumbed his depths and have found there is nothing more to be known in him. Then you give him up and go out in search of a more wonderful man. We are like that, continually seeking to experience the highest values in the outside world. But we soon find there is nothing much to it; and then it becomes possible for the soul to wake up.

It is not that all souls are in the same condition. Many people think that all souls were created simultaneously, and so they are faced with the problem of explaining the inequalities of souls at any given point in time. If souls were all created at the same time, how is it that some seem to be more advanced than others? The fact is that this idea of the soul's origin is itself illogical. It presupposes that creation took place in time, whereas time itself is only a by-product of the process by which the souls came into existence. You cannot speak of the origin of the soul in terms of time. Then how *are* you to think of the origin of the soul? Hindus are drastic in this regard: you just *don't* think about it, that is all. Those who do are like little children who retort to anything their father says by asking "Why?" Just because we can ask a certain question does not mean that in our present state we are capable of understanding the answer. If you still want to ask these questions, by all means do so; but I shall say that you like to waste your time; you are not serious. There are certain things which just cannot be explained in logical terms. All we can do profitably is to study the present state of things.

The present state is this: we do find inequality among individuals, but if we analyze the present condition of any particular person, we can also find what is sustaining the differences which cause inequality. Take a person who is devoting himself to the pursuit of material things. You may say to him, 'Don't you think there are better things for you to do? The things you are seeking don't last. Whatever you gather here you will have to leave behind. Why don't you acquire something permanent?' He probably will agree with you. 'Just so. What you say is right.' Then he begins to yawn, and the moment you leave him he will go his own way again. That is his nature. His intellect may understand a little and agree a little, but his nature does not agree, his nature follows its own course. Why is it so? If you ask a Hindu why a man is worldly or unscrupulous or full of sense desires, he will simply say it is his karma. Karma is not fate, and it is

not kismet. These two words do not come from India. The notion of a fixed or 'fated' portion you get from the Greeks, and 'kismet' comes from the Mohammedans. It is true that all three concepts seem to contain the idea of something which is of tremendous resistance and implacability, but there is this difference: whereas you cannot deny or frustrate either fate or kismet, you can deny karma and nullify it if you want to, although if you don't it will have its way. Hindus have never taught that the doctrine of karma makes a man accept his present status without any struggle to improve it if improvement is called for. Nor have we thought that karma has bound us hand and foot. We have nevertheless accepted karma as something that has to be reckoned with. When a Western psychologist says of a man, 'He was born with all kinds of wrong instincts. You cannot change him; they are too strongly ingrained in him. Let him alone,' what he is saying is that certain habits and tendencies are so strong in the person that they have become instinctive with him and he cannot control them by reason. Almost everyone has some of these compelling instincts. They are what determine the motivating and distinctive nature of a person, and they are what the Hindus call karma. And not only do we give these instincts a name, we try to explain what this karma is—that is the beauty of it.

III

In order to explain karma we must understand the nature of the mind. The mind is continually raising waves within itself; it is dynamic—not fully dynamic or equally dynamic at all times, but dynamic nevertheless. Even in sleep it is dynamic, and this not only when it creates dreams. Even when you are profoundly asleep the mind produces one wave within itself because of which you know you have slept; otherwise you could not know it. The dynamism of the mind is of various natures. I have told you on other occasions that there are four phases of the mind. There is *buddhi* or intelligence, which gives sure knowledge, or at least knowledge that has the appearance of surety. There is *manas,* a phase in which mind is doubtful. There is *ahaṅkāra*, or egoism, which always accompanies the first two phases. And there is *citta,* or the mind stuff, which seems to be buried so deep that we are usually not aware of its activities. It is in *citta* that the mind receives the impact from the senses and comes in contact with external reality, and it is *citta* that transforms these sensations into finished percepts or concepts. This fourth, and lowest, aspect of the mind also evokes memories, ideas, desires, images, and fancies from within its capacious storehouse and brings them to the surface, into the conscious part of the mind.

Now, all the thought waves or ideas produced by the mind can be classified under five different headings: correct knowledge, error, verbal knowledge (knowledge which has no counterpart in reality but is only an idea produced by words), memory, and sleep. These are the natural movements of the mind, and these movements are more or less beyond our conscious control. But the mind of an individual who is no longer so bound down by this gross aspect of reality behaves differently from that of the average person. His mind is no longer absolutely beyond his control but functions to a great extent under the control of his own will.

What will the movements of the mind of such a person be? For one thing, his sleep will be of a different kind from that of an average man. I told you that according to our psychologists there is in deep sleep just one wave of the mind. In an ordinary person that movement brings only a sense of vacancy and nonexistence, as if there were nothing there; although he feels refreshed

after he wakes up, he has had no experience. But when the mind of the individual of whom I am speaking produces the movement called sleep, he does not have the sense of unconsciousness. He has, rather, a sense of superconsciousness, of meditative consciousness. Those of you who meditate will understand this state. In meditation you have at least sometimes enjoyed that peace and sense of reality which you have never tasted in your waking state and which you recognize to be a superior experience to your waking experience. In the sleep of one who is established in meditation, his mind, being freed from the necessity of attending to any outside objects, goes back, under the impact of its own desire for spiritual knowledge, into the thought of God, The body, being inactive, might not register anything from the outside and the person might therefore appear to be unconscious, but inwardly, consciousness is awake. He rarely dreams, but if sometimes he does, these dreams also partake of the character of superconsciousness.

Further—and more important to mention in this connection—the knowledge of such an individual is always accurate knowledge. When he looks at a person, he will at once recognize whether he is addicted to evil-doing or always thinking good and doing good; one glance will be enough. In other words, his knowledge is sure, in it there is no possibility of error; therefore the two other kinds of mental movements are not possible to him—that is to say, error, which is perceiving or thinking something to be what it is not, and verbal knowledge, which is being befuddled by a word or phrase that can have no corresponding reality anywhere. Further, his whole mind in all its four aspects is so full of sure knowledge that it no longer dwells on anything small or gross, but only on superior things.

I should mention here that what we ordinarily call 'sure knowledge' is not necessarily sure. *We* think it is sure, that is all. For example, I might know from inquiry and other means that a certain man was a plumber, and I would consider that to be sure knowledge. Yet from a higher standpoint even such knowledge is mistaken. If I could see that he is not a man at all, but pure Spirit, although apparently endowed with a mind and body, then my sure knowledge would be: 'Here is God Himself in the form of a man.' To call him a plumber would be a mistake. Or if I still call him a plumber, I will say, 'Here is God going about in the form of a plumber.' You see, then, that when you think you know everything rightly your knowledge is not necessarily right. While you have many ways by which to determine the correctness of your knowledge of the outside world, these ways themselves may be full of error. Whether or not they are correct depends upon the standpoint from which you are looking at the world.

The person of whom I was speaking has seen through things; he has actually reached the condition where he can say, 'Sense knowledge, sense perception, sense enjoyment—these lead nowhere; I don't want them.' If I know a person only with my eyes and ears, I know very little of him. Only when I know him through intuitive knowledge and see him through intuitive vision and spiritual insight as the Spirit which he really is, can I say I have seen him. Those who give up the idea that the senses bring true knowledge will never remain satisfied with seeing things superficially. They will not be content even if they see every part of another's mind. They will be satisfied only when they perceive him for what he essentially is—Spirit, a fragment of Divinity itself.

The man of spiritual insight has undergone a profound change. Although apparently he sleeps, still it is not sleep; he does

not make errors, nor does he indulge in verbal fancies, and his correct knowledge is always of a spiritual nature. That is the kind of man he becomes.

What will be the conduct of such a person? You will find that he is no longer seeking any experience of the world, but is diving deep. There is a sort of inward look in his eyes, as though his attention were withdrawn from outside things. Sri Ramakrishna often used to give the illustration of a bird sitting on its eggs to describe the condition of a God-conscious man. He would say, 'If you look at the bird's eyes you will find a vacant look in them. The bird is not seeing anything outside, because its whole mind is on the eggs. Such also are the eyes of a person who has attained to union with God.' The moment such a person is free from any necessity for attention outside, his mind goes within.

That going within does not mean that he does not see the outer reality. This so-called objective reality has an inwardness also, and that inward essence of objective reality is perceived not by looking outside, but by looking within. One's own heart is the door through which one passes in order to enter into the heart of the whole universe of reality. That is the way. Yes, it is an odd way, for if I am to see you properly I have to close my eyes. But you see, such a person has come to the consciousness that this world as it appears is a reversal of what it really is. There is only one reality—the Divine Reality.

It is possible for every one of us to realize this state. Through some mischance, there has come the sense that there is something outside of yourself, but the consciousness will come from time to time that it is not really true, somewhere there is some mistake. And one day you will find that mistake corrected for good. After that you never make it again: even if you see this universe before you, you understand it for what it is. You will no longer be under the compulsion of this peculiar power called māyā.

(To be concluded)

(Continued from p. 368)

A consulting American psychologist, who specializes in the problems of the aged, advises his clients: 'Concentrate on the part of you that's still young and growing—your mind. Keep your mind awake and you'll stay young all over.' But what keeps the mind young and growing?

The Vedānta analyses human personality into five sheaths—those of food, energy, thought, intelligence, bliss—or three bodies: gross, subtle, and causal. The subtler sheaths fill and energize the grosser ones. But even the subtlest one, the causal or 'blissful sheath', depends upon Brahman or the Supreme Spirit for its support, vigour, joy, and life.[13]

The physical sheath is bound to deteriorate and ultimately perish. But the psychological part of man can defy senescence and even survive the physical destruction. The psychologist is right in advising his ageing clients to concentrate on the mind. But he takes them only halfway to the source of eternal youth. Possibly as a scientist he could go no farther. But the Upaniṣadic sages like Bhṛgu, great epic characters like Bhīṣma, saints of all religions and lands, have transcended the mental realm and discovered the spiritual existence which is undying Energy, Infinite Life, Perfect Bliss, and smokeless Light 'by whose luminosity all this shines'. It is by contemplating on It and living in Its sustaining grace and illumination, that a man can overcome decay and destruction. 'There is no other way to go across,' say the Vedāntic sages.

---

[13] *Taittirīya-upaniṣad,* II. v. 1.

BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ—A PHILOSOPHY OF COSMIC CONSOLIDATION

(LOKASANGRAHA)

DR. K. B. RAMAKRISHNA RAO

(*Continued from previous issue*)

WHAT IS YOGA ?

(KARMA-, JNANA- AND BHAKTI-YOGAS)

In a perspective such as this of Reality, it should be evident that demand for participation comes always and in infinite ways and to all beings. And it is this participation which is usually but only partially, and sometimes exclusively, codified or treated under three major headings: the *way* of Karma, the *way* of Jñāna and the *way* of Bhakti. But it is significant that they are called in the *Gītā* not 'ways' (*mārgas*) but *yogas*. Each is a *yoga*, and bears a special connotation but this is generally missed in its popular presentation. A subtle distinction is useful between a way that is a *mārga*, and a state that is a *yoga*. If the former is a path or a means to something the latter stands for a state of existence, an end in itself. It is interesting that the text of the *Bhagavad-gītā* does not speak of Bhakti-*mārga*, Jñāna-*mārga*, or Karma-*mārga*, but of Bhakti-*yoga*, Jñāna-*yoga*, and Karma-*yoga*. In each of these, *yoga* means a state of existence called 'Bhakti', 'Jñāna', or 'Karma', respectively. The emphasis then is shifted on to each of these not as means, but as 'states' of Bhakti or Jñāna or Karma. If so, these states have a relevance in the scheme of Reality which is consolidating Itself. Nothing can be separate from Reality, and a technique cannot be a *means* if it is not already a state of Reality Itself. If it is only a means leading to a reality, it implies that when the technique is on, the reality is not. This is excluding a technique from the realm of reality, a position which is unacceptable even to ordinary thinking, let alone being. The insight of the *Gītā* is to convert a technique into a being, even as it converts an individual into a cosmic entity. And call it Bhakti, Jñāna, or Karma, it is a state of being, and the *Gītā* does not refer to it as a process which brings about something as a result in time, for that would be giving a status not only to a technique as such but also to a time outside Reality.

What these states are actually, may be known later. But it surprises the student of the *Gītā* to find that the Lord, who represents Reality Itself, does not grant Bhakti, Jñāna, or Karma the status of *yoga*, if it is not in tune with His *own yoga*, His own state of being—*madyoga* or *ātma-yoga*, as He calls it.[25] Again when asked what that *yoga* of His is, He says: 'See My divine *yoga*'[26]—and what does He show? Not a means, not a technique, but the infinite Being Itself, a state of Cosmic Depersonalization, where personal identities are lost in the immense context of Reality Itself functioning as the whole of being, a being beyond the tensions of opposites, beyond the dichotomies of one and many, living and non-living, mind and matter, life and death, moving and unmoving, small and big, far and near, good and bad, and so on. It is a *samatva*, a balance or a harmony beyond the realms of ex-

---

25 ibid., XII. 11 ; XI. 47

26 ibid., XI. 8

istential and logical opposites, an equilibrium that is experienced as peace (*śānti*), an expanse which holds everything, is everything, and transcends everything. It is the incommensurate Life that gives life to everything, movement and stability to everything. It is balance and ease in being which carries with it a skill (*kauśala*) beyond all efforts to exist. It is an all-comprehending perfection of an incrutable nature where discordance is set at naught. It is a scheme of consolidation wherein incessant rejuvenation takes place through a sacrifice (*yajña*) which is re-creative.

Bhakti, Jñāna, and Karma are instances of consolidation along these lines, and if each were to shed its exclusiveness, it could verily be the state that the Lord calls *His yoga*. Otherwise it falls short of this ideal *yoga*. 'And so, beyond all these "yogas" be a *yogī*,' is Kṛṣṇa's call to Arjuna.[27] The sharp but subtle distinction between *His yoga* and all *yogas* is very often missed.

Now to know what these 'states' are.

Karma-*yoga* is a state of acceptance of the dynamic nature of Reality. It is the wholesome art of submission to the dialectics of the dynamic Reality within oneself and outside, aiming at perfecting the work in which one's being at any given moment is involved. It is as much attachment to work as it is detachment from the fruits that follow. The fruits themselves follow depending on the degree of concentration, devotion, and perfection of the work on hand and they follow the dialectics that have shaped the conditions for the work, and so the fruits. That is, concern with success or failure is just immaterial in the scheme as long as the motive for perfecting the work is there. The mental tension that builds up with the hopes of success or fears of failure is thus relieved at the very start. Any fulfilment is thus effected by the performance of the work as 'duty' in the larger scheme of consolidation.

This is not effected in isolation, for no 'karma' becomes a Karma-*yoga*, if the mechanical aspect of it is not informed by intelligence. This is the awareness or consciousness called Jñāna-*yoga*. A linking up of the present work or duty with the larger sinews of reality far beyond one's life-duration—both forward and backward—is the work of this awareness, which renders a work a 'duty', making one's existence authentic in the realm of reality and value.

With this consciousness emerges a transformation in the stature of an individual and his work, which now become cosmic, and in whose fulfilment both the personality and duty respectively are fulfilled. And so it calls forth an unwavering absorption. This is losing one's isolation and becoming in action, thought, and feeling an aspect of a cosmic reality. This state is Bhakti-*yoga*.

In any *siddhi* or *yoga* or maturation of a cosmic idea and function, none of the above can be exclusive and isolated, and the extent to which there is a synthesis or identity of these states into a unique ensemble, constitutes *yoga*, which Kṛṣṇa calls *His yoga* or 'being'. The Infinite thus figured by such an occasioning is Being at its best or wholesomest. It is the state of consolidation of the cosmos taking place at one centre in Infinity Itself.

This is the synthesis or ensemble : When effort is, but no idea of a result ; when work is not merely physical but has the glow of sentience ; when sentience is, but with an absorption which is never piecemeal or partial but universal or cosmic. Is it possible to achieve these in one's lifetime ? If so, that seems to be the state of *yoga* or cosmic fruition which the Lord says is 'His'. How can there be something transcendent to this, for Infinity is concentred therein ? This is the *ātma-yoga* or

[27] cf. ibid., VI. 46

brahma-yoga,[28] and one is said to be then in *brāhmī-sthiti*,[29] and never lapses from it, for he is established in the dialectics of the Infinity.

Realization or liberation is not then far to seek. In the context of a philosophy of cosmic consolidation, freedom is to attain to this condition of *ātma-yoga*, a state of composure beyond the relative dialectics of ordinary thought and being. The *Gītā* presents the idea of liberation in such a basic and existential sense but we mistake it for something to be earned after one's physical death. It is life lived here, and the possibility of it is fully vindicated in the instance of a *yogī*, or one in *brahma-yoga*. Life is living with Reality and actively participating in the dynamics of Reality; and liberation is living a life of spirit rather than that of a carnal body, that is, living up to a purpose beyond the logic of individual existence. When the spirit lives as spirit, and not as body, it is a sign of its having discovered its infinite dimension. And so, from that standpoint it arranges the contingents and evaluates them in the realm of physical life in such a way that these do not overweigh or fog the vision of the universal being. It is from this state, again, that it maintains continuously an inscrutable link or balance even among what are apparently opposing elements. Liberation is establishing oneself in this dynamics of self-existence (*ātma-yoga*), wherein nothing is discarded, but nothing is held final, for each is seen vitally linked with the rest of being. Liberation, for us humans, is living in peace with Reality, or in universal relationship, which is a relationship qualified differently: it is not escape from relationship with the contingents, but is an escape from the *necessity* of such a relationship. To put it differently, it is not escape from the 'relationship' between the spirit as the subject and matter (or the world of contingents) as the object, but it is freedom from the necessity of such relation for the basic existence of the spirit. This is the transcendental state (*param bhāva*), for which the criterion is: the feeling of necessity is bondage, and the overcoming of it is liberation.

III

Is It Pantheism or Fatalism?

An estimate of the philosophy of the *Gītā* presented above, of an all-inclusive Reality, may be mistaken for a rude pantheism. And eventually it may be estimated as leaving no chance for an individual either to call himself an individual or to claim anything his own.

With regard to his being and action, it may also look like predestination or fatalism, which reduces the individual effort to nothing.

As a superficial understanding of the philosophy sketched here, the doubts seem to possess a validity. But the presented Reality in Its transcendental aspect transcends the limits of a rude equation with pantheism. The transcendent glory (*param bhāva*) is the mystery hidden not only as the power that makes possible all the concrete moments or events of existence, but reaches beyond their dialectics as the acosmic truth. We should not miss the import of the Lord's statements such as, 'With a single fragment of Myself I stand supporting the whole universe'; and these remind us of the Vedic descriptions of the Truth, e.g., 'Three-fourths of it rest in the immortal heaven.'[30]

And with regard to leaving a choice or freedom to act, a philosophy which links up the individual with the cosmos as a whole gives one an individuality far beyond his

---

28 ibid., XI. 47; V. 21
29 ibid., II. 72

30 *Ṛg-Veda*, X. 90

identifications with the near-at-hand. It has the alchemic effect of a transmutation of the conventional finitude into a metaphysical Infinity. It effects not simply a change of vision from an individual angle but restores the lost awareness of one's own infinite Being. The philosophy which underlies this change has behind it the deeper significance of a *cosmic preparation for an individual action.* In other words, at any given moment a responsibility is placed at the doors of the individual to act in a way conducive to the consolidation of his own purposes now brought to the level of consciousness, and which are realized as not different from the cosmic purpose and consolidation. We sadly miss this fact, if we are to ignore the position of the individual in the intricate scheme of Reality, and the fact that the individual is the point at which at any given moment the whole of the cosmos is *waiting to function.* Further, it is also true that the individual is the cosmic theme incarnate in the setting of a species; and it is the species which profits by the failings of individuals, and builds itself up on the basis of the other individuals, for consolidation. This is the meaning of a collective endeavour and the significance of a culture built not by an individual but by a group. Whereas taken severally, individuals are given the chance to prove their worth in carrying forward the consolidation of a hidden theme of the universal species. It may at times be let down by individuals due to either physical, intellectual or emotional or any other incapacities or lapses. And so the individual is proved a waste, and lives a waste,[31] but the species itself moves on in its course undaunted like a wheel in motion.

Fatalism, in so far as that the end is predetermined, is not absence of freedom to act, but the failure of the individual to understand and act, and when he fails to act the result follows by a law of necessity. In any case it is to be seen that there is a necessary link between action and result. Whereas in the one—that is, when the individual acts with understanding—the result expands the vision of possibilities of further action and consolidation, in the other—that is, when the individual fails to act—such possibilities are shut down for himself. It is freedom to be Infinite and to go with the Infinite, and it is suicide to stay individual and finite.

31 cf. *Gītā*, III. 16

ESSAY ON APPLIED RELIGION

ON MAKING SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

SWAMI BUDHANANDA

(*Continued from the previous issue*)

MUCH DEPENDS ON TRUE DISCIPLESHIP

We, spiritual aspirants who just fail to make the grade, are apt to think and claim regretfully that if only our circumstances were different we would have made great spiritual progress. This is a gilded delusion to which we tenaciously cling. The fact is that if we were different we should have made progress under any sort of circumstances. In the lives of the great spiritual heroes of the world we find that in almost all cases they wrested spiritual self-betterment from the clutches of the most unfavourable circumstances.

This is why Śrī Śaṅkarācārya teaches:

> 'Success depends essentially on a qualified aspirant; time, place and other such means are auxiliaries in this regard.'[23]

The aspirant who seeks to move ahead on the spiritual path must grasp this fact absolutely clearly. For our slow progress or no progress in spiritual life, we may blame a hundred things in this world or other worlds, but nothing will ever alter the fact that 'success depends essentially on a qualified aspirant'. As long as we have a tendency to hold various other factors of life responsible for our no-progress in spiritual life, we may well conclude that we have not yet set our foot on the spiritual path. The first sign of spiritual growth is manifest in a person's ability to acknowledge facts as they are, shorn of all delusive misconceptions born of self-love.

Placing squarely before the aspirant this basic fact that the aspirant himself is responsible for his own spiritual growth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa teaches:

> 'Let a man raise himself by himself, let him not lower himself; for he alone is the friend of himself, he alone is the enemy of himself.'[24]

In his illuminating commentary on this verse Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says:

> 'Let a man, immersed in the ocean of *saṁsāra* lift up himself, i.e, let him so train himself as to become a *yogārūdha*, let him practise and attain to Yoga. Let him not lower himself; for he alone is the friend of himself. There is indeed no other friend that can lead to liberation from *saṁsāra*; nay, any so-called friend is only inimical to him who seeks liberation, as the former becomes an object of affection, which is the cause of bondage. Hence the emphasis "he alone is the friend of himself". And he alone is the enemy of himself. The other enemy who is outside is made an enemy only by himself. Hence the emphasis "he alone is the enemy of himself".'

Who can raise himself by himself? Only a true disciple who has disciplined himself can do so. No spiritual progress is ever possible without true discipleship. In a lecture on 'Discipleship',[25] Swami Vivekananda teaches:

---

23 *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, Verse 14.

24 *Bhagavad-gītā*, VI. 5.

25 *The Complete Works* (Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati, Himalayas) Vol. VIII (1959) p. 106. Aspirants will be greatly helped by reading this illuminating lecture.

'An old proverb of India comes to my mind. "There are hundreds of thousands of teachers, but it is hard to find one disciple." It seems to be true. The one important thing in the attainment of spirituality is the attitude of the pupil. When the right attitude is there, illumination comes easily.'

In the last two sentences Swamiji compresses a good deal of what is taught in Hindu scriptures. Obviously one to whom 'illumination comes easily' is not the raw unsure fumbling beginner of the other day. A true disciple is already an advanced seeker. He had a history of successful striving behind him before coming to this point. This becomes obvious from what Sadānanda in effect teaches in the *Vedāntasāra* (lesson 6):

> A competent student is the aspirant who has mastered the essence of the authentic scriptures through proper study, who, being absolved from all sins in this or in a previous birth, through non-performance of those actions which increase bondage and performance of those actions which lessen it, as well as by penance and devotion, has become entirely pure in mind, and who has adopted the four well-known Vedāntic *sādhānas* as means to the attainment of spiritual knowledge.

In the first verse of his Vedānta manual, *Ātmabodha*, Śrī Śaṅkarācārya says:

> 'I am composing the *Ātmabodha* (or Self-knowledge) to serve the need of those who have been purified through the practice of austerities, and who are peaceful in heart, free from cravings, and desirous of liberation.'

These are the signs of the true disciple.

Those who are purified, peaceful, free from cravings and desirous of liberation, have not only set their spiritual life in firm perspective but they have also risen on the way towards its goal. These are true disciples. They bid fair to make spiritual progress almost as a matter of course, through the guidance of the guru, personal striving, and the grace of God.

The problem of many sincere aspirants is to know how to become a true disciple. Any disciple who may have received instructions from a guru is not necessarily a true disciple. Oftener than not, many are very untrue disciples. This is proved by the way of their living. A true disciple will manifest those spiritual qualities which will take him to the goal.

In various places strewn through the Upaniṣads we have broad hints as to the making of the true disciple. The true guru is a leonine person who has broken the snares of the world and become free. He is the exalted illumined spirit. The disciple, if less exalted, must be at least a lion cub with all the potential strength to be free. The popular portrait of a spineless, mindless yes-man called the *celā* or disciple, is not one that emerges from the teachings of the authentic masters of spiritual life, particularly in Hinduism. He or she is a growing lion-cub.

The teachers of the Upaniṣads had their own effective technique of inculcating those virtues in the novitiates which would eventually make them true disciples. They did a good part of it through the peace-chants and fervent prayers, which formed a suction process as it were, for claiming the most essentially needed things from the Supreme Spirit.

When we analyse a few of these chants and prayers occurring in various major Upaniṣads—we shall see in what a subtle and yet simple manner the sages of the Upaniṣads inculcated in the new aspirants the virtues of a true disciple:

> Om. From the unreal lead me to the Real,
> From darkness lead me to Light,
> From death lead me to Immortality.

As Christ teaches, 'Ask and it shall be given unto you.' So it is of supreme im-

portance to know what to ask for. One must learn to ask for that after attaining which there remains nothing greater or more to ask for. Hence the disciple's psyche is fastened to the Real, the Light, and Immortality. The Real is the Light and That Itself is Immortality.

> 'Om. O Gods, may we hear with our ears what is auspicious. O ye adorable ones, may we see with our eyes what is auspicious. May we sing praises to ye, and enjoy with strong limbs and body the life allotted to us by the Gods. Om Peace, Peace, Peace.'
>
> 'Om. May the different parts of my body, my tongue, *prāṇa*, ears, and my strength, and also other sense organs, be nourished! All indeed is Brahman, as is declared in the Upaniṣads. May I never deny Brahman! May Brahman never deny me! May there be no denial at all. May there never be denial on my part! May all the virtues described in the Upaniṣads belong to me who am devoted to Brahman! Yea, may they all belong to me!
> Om, Peace, Peace, Peace.'
>
> 'Om. May Brahman protect us both (the preceptor and the disciple)! May Brahman bestow upon us both the fruit of Knowledge! May we both obtain energy to acquire Knowledge! May what we both study reveal the Truth! May love and harmony dwell amongst us.
> Om, Peace, Peace, Peace.'

It is to be noticed that what was being inculcated in the peace-chants was the abiding sense of the essential and an irrevocable commitment to the Divine and a whole-hogger's passion for attaining it then and there, through renunciation of all that was contrary to this aspiration, and cultivation of all the virtues leading to it. The Supreme could be attained only by the strong and energetic and wholeheartedly devoted. Without a perfect understanding between the teacher and the disciple, mutuality of acceptance between aspirant and chosen Ideal, the Supreme could not be attained. It was through seeing the auspicious, hearing the auspicious, and assimilating the auspicious that the aspirant became pure. And 'blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God'. 'May all the virtues described in the Upaniṣads belong to me who am devoted to Brahman', the disciple was taught to pray. And why? Because unless these virtues became part of his being, Brahman, to which he was devoted, could not be realized in experience.

When these virtues become part of the disciple's character he or she advances on the way, as a matter of course. Mention of these virtues is strewn through the pages of the Upaniṣads. These virtues are summarized and systematized in Vedānta manuals as *sādhana-catuṣṭaya*, fourfold spiritual disciplines. A study of these *sādhanās* will immediately reveal to us their importance in an aspirant's life.

These fourfold *sādhanās* are: discrimination between the real and the unreal; renunciation of the enjoyment of the fruits of actions in this world and hereafter; six treasures[26] such as control of the mind, etc.; and longing for liberation.

Śrī Śaṅkarācārya teaches that these are the virtues, which being present the devotion to Brahman succeeds, and in the absence of which it fails.[27]

In the history of Hindu religion right from the time of the Upaniṣads to this day, this one teaching has run like an unbreakable thread, that the aspirant must practise austerities for making spiritual progress and attaining the goal of life.

In the *Śvetāśvatara-upaniṣad* we read:

> 'Through the power of austerity and through the grace of the Lord, the sage

---

26 The six treasures are: *śama* or restraining the outgoing mental propensities; *dama* or restraining the external sense organs; *uparati* or withdrawing of the self; *titikṣā* or forbearance; *samādhāna* or self-settledness; and *śraddhā* or faith.

27 *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi*, Verse 18.

> Śvetāśvatara realized Brahman and proclaimed the highly sacred Knowledge, supremely cherished by the company of seers, to *sannyāsins* of the most advanced stage.'[28]

Commenting on this verse Śrī Śaṅkarācārya points out :

> 'The word (*tapas*) generally refers to penances and self-mortification. It also includes the performance of the duties suited to one's stage of life and position in society, the control of the senses, and the concentration of the mind.'

This idea of practising austerities has had such a firm hold on the minds of spiritual seekers all through our history, that our religious books are full of stories of rigorous austerities of various types, performed for attaining the spiritual end. The idea prevailed that one became pure in mind through practice of austerities. We read also of many examples of misguided use of austerities for gaining objectives other than spiritual. This was perhaps why Śrī Kṛṣṇa felt the necessity of clarifying the concept of austerities. In the *Gītā* we find him teaching threefold austerities, the practice of which will help any aspirant in any age or any religion to be well on the way to making spiritual progress. These three types of austerities are : austerity of body, austerity of speech, austerity of mind. He taught :

> 'Worship of the Devas, the Gurus and the wise; purity, straightforwardness, continence, and non-injury are called the austerity of the body.
>
> 'Speech which causes no vexation and is true, as also agreeable and beneficial, and regular study of the Vedas (authentic scriptures)—these are said to form the austerity of speech.
>
> 'Serenity of mind, kindliness, silence, self-control, honesty of motive—this is called the mental austerity.'[29]

In the *Gītā* Śrī Kṛṣṇa further teaches by an imperative what constitutes true discipleship:

> 'Know that (Supreme Knowledge), by prostrating yourself, by questions, and by service; the wise, those who have realized the Truth, will instruct you in that Knowledge.'[30]

Humble prostrations before the guru, reverential intelligent questioning and personal service to the guru are thus also basic in true discipleship.

The disciple wholeheartedly devoted to the guru succeeds in spiritual life.

According to changes in the ways of life down the centuries, the modes of austerities have tended to change, but the three austerities taught by Śrī Kṛṣṇa, and what constitutes true discipleship, will always be considered quintessential teachings, relevant for the ages to come.

We have further clarification and simplification of the concept of austerities in the life and teaching of Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples.

The reader of Sri Ramakrishna's life knows that he practised severe austerities for more than twelve years before becoming a blissful giver of illumination and joy. But out of consideration and compassion he greatly lightened the burden of necessary austerities for modern man, whose power of endurance is so meagre, Reducing it to the minimum, he taught:

> 'Have Bhakti within, and give up all cunning and deceit. Those who are engaged in business, such as work in office or trade, should also stick to truth. Truthfulness is the Tapasya (austerity) of this age of Kali.
>
> 'Unless one always speaks the truth, one cannot find God who is the soul of truth.
>
> 'One must be very particular about telling the truth. Through truth one can realize God.'[31]

28 VI 21.

29 XVII. 14-16.

30 IV. 34

31 *Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 1965), Sayings No. 530, 531, 532.

In this one word 'truth' Sri Ramakrishna compressed all the creative concepts of austerities indispensable for attaining purity of mind (*citta-śuddhi*) leading to God-realization. What is contrary to attaining God is falsehood.

Emphasizing Sri Ramakrishna's teaching on truth as austerity, Holy Mother taught:

> 'How devoted the Master (Sri Ramakrishna) was to truth ! Alas, we cannot follow his example. The Master used to say that truth alone is Tapasya (austerity) in the Iron Age (Kali Yuga). One attains to God by sticking to truth.' [32]

In her own original teachings she also laid emphasis on another aspect of austerity, at which we have already hinted in our first Section. With a profound psychological approach to the concept of austerity as purificatory to mind, she taught with a deep personal accent:

> 'The mind is everything. It is in the mind alone that one feels pure and impure. A man, first of all, must make his own mind guilty and then alone he can see another man's guilt. Does anything ever happen to another if you enumerate his faults ? It only injures you. This has been my attitude. Hence I cannot see anybody's faults. If a man does a trifle for me, I try to remember him even for that. To see the faults of others ! One should never do it. I never do so. Forgiveness is Tapasya (austerities).' [33]

Swami Brahmananda, a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and a unique teacher of spiritual life, answered a disciple's questions on austerity in the following dialogue:

> Disciple: 'Maharaj, what is austerity ?'
> Maharaj: 'Austerities are of many kinds. Once I saw a man who had taken a vow not to sit or lie down for twelve years. When I met him only five or six months remained of this period. Continuous standing for so many years had made his legs swell as they do in elephantiasis. When he slept he held himself up by a rope.
> 'Some practice the austerity of standing all night in deep water in the winter and at the same time performing japam. Again there is the austerity of sitting in the blazing summer sun in the center of four fires.'
> Disciple: 'Maharaj, is that what austerity means ?'
> Maharaj: 'Good gracious, no ! Generally men practice such austerities with the hope that, in their next lives, they may be born rich and find greater worldly enjoyments.'
> Disciple: 'Do they gain their wishes ?'
> Maharaj: 'God only knows !
> Disciple: 'What then is real austerity ?'
> Maharaj: 'These are not real austerities. Anyone can practice them. The body is easily controlled, but it is another matter to control the mind. It is very difficult to renounce lust and gold, to give up the desire for name and fame.
> 'Real austerity is based upon these three principles: First, take refuge in truth. Truth is the pillar to which you must always hold, while performing any action. Second, conquer lust. Third, renounce all cravings. Observe these three principles. That is real austerity, and the greatest of these is to conquer lust. It has been declared in our scriptures that he who practices continence for twelve years can easily attain God. This is the most difficult task. I can tell you from my own experience that it is not possible to meditate properly unless you keep continent. The craving of lust is very subtle and extremely difficult to control. That is why a spiritual aspirant must always be careful in associating with the opposite sex. Through continence a special power is stored up in the brain. If a man becomes established in continence, he will begin to see the expression of God everywhere.
> But remember, it is not possible to

---

[32] *Sri Sarada Devi the Holy Mother* (Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, 1949) p. 523.
[33] ibid., p. 457.

practice continence without devoting yourself to the practice of japam.' [34]

The disciple who has made these virtues, austerities, and disciplines the very ingredients of his character has risen on the path to the point where he is able to practise any of the yogas suited to his temperament and competence. Still, on the way to becoming a true disciple he should know how to avoid certain pitfalls.

It is good to know how, far from being true disciples, we become pseudo-disciples, and instead of following the Guru's instructions like honest toilers in the field of God-realization, take recourse to worldly expectations. To such the Guru's admonition would be :

'Many are under the impression that if they are initiated by an enlightened (Siddha) Guru, all their miseries will be dispelled in some mysterious way through his grace, if he only wills it ! Thus, incurable diseases will be healed ; employment after the heart will be secured ; they will have worldly happiness and prosperity ; will be able easily to arrange suitable marriages for their daughters ; will have success in school or college examinations ; will win law-suits, and prosper in trade and business ; will get rid of their family troubles ; will be able to escape the evil influences of an unluckly star like Saturn, and so on and so forth ! There is no end of their supplications to the Guru ! They ought to know that there is no connection whatever between initiation, or entering upon the spiritual path, and these trivial mundane matters. It is also childish to solicit such favours from the Guru ; it is not at all a sign of spirituality. He is no omnipotent Providence, no Dispenser of earthly gifts, no Ruler over the destinies of the people of the world. It is wrong to embarrass or trouble him by such importunate requests. They rather tend to make the disciple an object of the Guru's displeasure than a recipient of his favours and blessings. The relationship between Guru and disciple is of a purely spiritual nature—pertaining to spiritual matters only.' [35]

After taking initiation from the Guru, some disciples expect to be carried on his shoulders to God's abode. The Guru would admonish such disciples thus :

'The Guru cannot make you realise the Truth unless you try hard for it yourself. The Guru can show you the way ; can remove your doubts and difficulties, and correct your mistakes ; can warn you if you go astray ; can put you back on the right track ; and can even take you some distance along it, holding you by the hand. But the walking you have to do yourself—he cannot carry you to the goal on his shoulders. The path is long and difficult, no doubt ; but it will not do if for that reason you sit down in the middle of the way, saying that it is beyond your power to proceed further, or if you get frightened, or give up hope. You cannot stand still. You have either to go forward or fall back. If you fall back, you will perforce lose what you have already gained. The more you go forward, the easier will the path become. Courage and strength will come, and you will get joy.' [36]

There are other disciples who think that they have paid their fee to the Guru if they have made him some material offerings, and that this will help them to receive his grace, without which one cannot progress on the spiritual path. To such disciples the Guru's admonition would be :

'Whole-hearted practice of the Mantra imparted by the Guru and an ardent effort to follow his instructions in the

[34] Swami Prabhavananda : *The Eternal Companion,* (Vedanta Press, Hollywood, California, 1947), pp. 222-24.

[35] Swami Virajananda : *Towards the Goal Supreme* (Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta, 1968) Saying No. 35, p. 19. Swami Virajananda was a President of the Ramakrishna Order. His spiritual teachings compiled in this book are considered to be a good vade-mecum for earnest spiritual aspirants.

[36] ibid., Saying No. 60.

> details of life, are the Guru's only real remuneration (Guru-dakshina), and are the best means to gain his affection and blessings and to attain spiritual perfection.' [37]

Some disciples, after receiving initiation, and half-heartedly practising spiritual disciplines for a while, get greatly dejected, for they find that not only is God nowhere to be seen but there is not even a ray of light flashing from anywhere. Exercising their own minds in a wrong way, they gradually fall victim to all sorts of doubts and become extremely miserable. To such disciples the Guru would say :

> 'The qualified Guru imparts to the disciple, through initiation by the Mantra, the deepest secret truth which he himself has realised by his own spiritual practices. Do not attempt to judge or value him by the foot-rule of practical reason. This would be like the green-grocer who priced the diamond at exactly nine seers of egg-plants—and not a single one more! These are not matters of argument or disputation, but are subtle mysterious truths not grasped by the intellect. They can only be comprehended if one goes on doing spiritual practices with firm faith in the instructions of the Guru. Then, veil after veil will be lifted, and the light of Truth will shine in all its glory.' [38]

Some disciples are more clever. They have heard that God or the Guru takes all the burden of those devotees who practise self-resignation. They are clever in a worldly way but do not have any insight into their own mental make-up. They do not even know what is *true* self-resignation and what is false playing at it. To such disciples the Guru's admonition is :

> 'There are many who say to the Guru after initiation, "We shall not be able to do anything. We are now free, having placed all responsibility upon you." This is just an excuse for evading one's own responsibility, and for not wishing to do anything. Is spirituality so easily acquired? Is it so cheap? "As is the idea, so is the attainment." Realisation is commensurate with the depth and intensity of thought and action. Can all responsibility be shifted to the Guru by mere word of mouth? One has to surrender oneself completely, by sacrificing one's little ego. That is achieved by long practice. You run about day and night and work ceaselessly, even giving up food and sleep, to earn a few paltry coins. But when it comes to the matter of acquiring spiritual knowledge and devotion you say, "We shall not be able to do anything!" How absurd, indeed! . . .' [39]

There are also disciples who expect the Guru to take the burden of their sins so that they may enjoy the good things of the world for another spell and also incidentally acquire religious merits by the Guru's grace, which they have already received in the form of initiation. The Guru's admonition to them would be:

> 'No one can take upon himself anybody else's burden of sin, not even the Guru. It is a great mistake to suppose that the Guru has taken upon his shoulders the whole burden of your sins by initiating you. Only the Incarnations of God can and, in fact, do that, because they are, verily, an unconditioned ocean of mercy. They come down specially for the purpose of delivering sinners and the afflicted. No sin can touch God; yet, because of His assuming the human body, sins of those who take refuge in Him attack Him in the shape of diseases and cause Him suffering. A sin committed, can be atoned for only by a poignant feeling of repentance within, and by leading a holy life after having given up all sinful actions. The fire of Self-knowledge alone can burn up all tendency to sin.' [40]

---

[37] ibid., Saying No. 80.
[38] ibid., Saying No. 83.
[39] ibid., Saying No. 85.
[40] ibid., Saying No. 86.

Again, the sincere complaining lot who nag the Guru to do something for them that may calm their minds, etc. In reference to such disciples the Guru says:

> 'Many complain only a short time after initiation, "Why is it that the mind is not getting quiet, that we are not able to meditate properly? Please do something to make the mind calm." Is it easy to have a quiet mind, or the faculty of diving deep into meditation? The mind has a natural outgoing tendency under the influence of Samskaras (habits, tendencies and impressions) and attachment to sense-objects accumulated in previous lives. Consequently, it always seeks to possess and enjoy these objects. There is no short-cut to make this restless mind quiet, except by repeated effort and renunciation. One has to practise Japa and meditation with patience and constancy—day after day, month after month, nay, year after year—in accordance with the method prescribed by the Guru, and, at the same time, to try to develop non-attachment to worldly objects. The more the craving for sense-objects decreases, the more the love and devotion for your Chosen Ideal will grow. The more you realise Him to be nearer and dearer than your own dear ones—the more will the mind automatically become calm and quiet. Then meditation will also deepen, and you will have joy and peace. Instead of being in a hurry for quick results, one must stick to spiritual practices like Sri Ramakrishna's hereditary peasant, who goes on tilling his soil even if his crops fail year after year.'[41]

No effort is needed to be a false disciple or pseudo-disciple. It takes perpetual wakefulness, unremitting self-application, and sustained toiling on the path, in the manner taught by the Guru, to be a true disciple. It is of utmost importance to the aspirant to learn to become a true disciple.

One who has been nurtured in spiritual life in this background and has then devoutly practised the disciplines of the yogas suitable to his temperament, eventually experiences awakening of his inner spiritual consciousness from lower to higher levels. This is the awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī*, the potential spiritual power of a person. One whose *kuṇḍalinī* has not yet awakened does not really make any spiritual progress. The rising of the *kuṇḍalinī* brings inner transformation in the disciple and he gets spiritual experiences.

Let us not make any mistake, spiritual experience is not attained easily. Through no learning or cleverness or mechanical contrivance can a man acquire it. But a person who is confirmed in true discipleship, even if he is unlettered, will attain it as a matter of course.

Striving From One's Station In Life

It is well known that different religions prescribe different forms of spiritual disciplines. It is also to be noticed that even in the same religion the disciplines prescribed for the men of the world, and the renouncers of the world, are different. Again in the same religion different forms of spiritual disciplines are enjoined for different stages of life of the same person.

Particularly in Hinduism, from the Vedic times life was mapped out in four stages: those of the *brahmacārin* (celibate student), gṛhastha (married householder), *vānaprasthin* (retired householder devoted to intensifying spiritual life) and *sannyāsin* (renouncer of the world entirely dedicated to realization of God). In these four stages of life different forms of duties and spiritual practices were enjoined for a progressive spiritual journey through life, stage by stage until the Supreme was attained. It has been pointed out:

> 'In none of these stages must the man grasp at the special duties of the other three; the student must not be a householder, a recluse, or an ascetic; the

---

[41] ibid., Saying No. 88.

householder must not be a celibate, a recluse, or an ascetic; the recluse must not seek again the joys of the household; nor must the ascetic long after the quiet attachments of the recluse. Each stage has its own duties and its own pleasures. Discharged and enjoyed each in its own stage, they lead to the orderly unfolding of the Jivatma; when the Ashramas are disregarded, his evolution is delayed.

'Now in modern days the Ashramas cannot be exactly lived according to the details of the ancient rules, the conditions having changed so much; but if we get a clear idea of the fundamental duties of each, we shall still be able to shape the life to an orderly course of development.'[42]

In the conception of the Hindu teachers, life is a spiritual undertaking of the soul to the goal of seeing God, and the world is the ground for working it out. And hence there is hardly any difference between the secular and the sacred when this basic spiritual purpose of life is understood and worked for.

Among these four stages of life, in the very first—that of the *brahmacārin*—all the ethical virtues were so deeply ingrained in the student that he could spontaneously develop a well-rounded character, a healthy body and a sound mind. Education in various branches of learning was so planned that along with the acquiring of knowledge, a comprehensive sense of values was inculcated in him, so that all his physical, mental and spiritual interests were safeguarded by a single graded scheme. The basic values were four: *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (pleasure), and *mokṣa* (liberation of the spirit). Besides, the *brahmacārin* was trained to develop the powers of discrimination, will, and concentration of the mind so that he could handle himself, life and the world in a spiritually creative manner with confidence, courage, and success.

(*To be continued*)

---

42 *Sanatana Dharma* (Central Hindu College, Benares, 1904), p. 103.



HUMAN TRENDS

SOMETHING OF VALUE IS MISSING

'Love: that self-love for two,' wrote Madame de Stael.

Marcel Proust wrote, 'It is a mistake to speak of a bad choice in love, since as soon as a choice exists, it can only be bad.'

And Swami Vivekananda, striking straight from the shoulder as always, wrote, 'All the love of the world is hypocrisy and hollowness.'

If love and lovers are blind, they (and it) are also deaf. Lovers have always ignored warnings, advice, threats, pleas of any sort, considering all such intrusions as interruptions to be side-stepped. 'Love conquers all' and with assistance from poets picking at lute and lyre, many of us came to believe this.

Cupid, that winged, pink-cheeked, chubby cherub, strung his bow and let fly his arrow, its sweet sting sending us into agony-ecstasy, infecting us with amour's rosy fantasy. Love was all, or so we believed.

Today, love stands barefoot on rocky ground. Love is having a hard time of it, particularly in the West, where like so many ideals, it remains conspicuous by its absence. Cupid is no longer regarded as playful, harmless and welcomed at any time. Many in today's western life feel that love is unimportant, and non-existent, something to be ignored, a pastime for fools and adolescents of all ages.

Which of course has changed the attitude towards Cupid, too. Now many regard that winged messenger of Venus as a meddlesome overfed dwarf in flight. And if he hovers nearby to shoot his gentle arrows of love into the heart of anyone, he is apt to receive an arrow in return, steel tipped and speeding towards his head.

Love. We don't need it, we don't like it, say many in the West.

'We are too sophisticated today, too knowing, too wise for romance,' say people in the West. Some even admit to being too jaded, too disappointed, too frustrated to even consider loving someone else.

Romantic love, ever on thin ice, seems to have fallen through and to be perhaps sinking for the proverbial third and last time. This highest of ideals between man and woman, husband and wife appears to have a shaky place in today's western society.

One hears of it, if at all, in the most unfavourable of terms. It is a paradox, it is said, and an enigma, a challenge and a waste of time, a sadness and a trial, pathetic and comic, a rarity bordering on the non-existent and the kind of thing even a lunatic would flee from were he not chained to an asylum wall.

There is an African saying: Throw away whatever you choose, but always replace it with something of value.

What appears to have replaced romantic love in the hearts, minds and fantasies of western living?

The replacement seems to be an incredible lack of restraint in personal desires. A tidal wave of carnality stands high before us, bringing with it a sensuality unmatched at any other time in western history. Instead of love, there is licentiousness and sensationalism, sexual obsessions of any and all persuasions, all of it done quite casually and openly. Incredible as it may seem, these brutal changes are the only references one finds to love in many books, films, songs and on varied levels of social behaviour.

On Display

'Love, in distinction from friendship,' said Hannah Arendt, 'is killed, or rather extinguished, the moment it is displayed in public.'

In the West, it is this public display of what has replaced love that is so startling.

Men and women, young and old, publically live together, proclaiming 'marriage is only a piece of paper and spoils a good friendship'. Particularly in America, marriage is under fire, resulting in a 50% divorce rate, meaning that one of every two marriages today ends in divorce. Of those remaining legally married, more and more publically announce 'an understanding'. This means that husband and wife agree to stay together while living totally separate lives often involving illicit liaisons outside of the marriage. As the saying goes—'They agree to disagree.'

Newly divorced men and women, many of them in their early twenties, renounce marriage or so they say, but will quickly jump at this modern practice of living together as man and wife. On the occasion of even a minor disagreement, many of these couples split up only to quickly select another partner and move in with him or her.

Why so free and easy? Why so many casual liaisons? Sex is one reason given, loneliness another. In either case, a concern for oneself to the extreme is upon us here in the West.

Meanwhile, marriage does have its adherents. Lawyers, for example. The high rate of divorce has meant a boom in legal fees for them. And there is the ever growing number of Catholic priests and nuns who renounce their vows of celibacy to leave the order and marry often monk with nun.

This is a touchy subject with the Catholic church, which shies away from comment on the ever increasing number of priests and nuns deciding that telling their beads isn't as much fun as telling each other 'I do'.

The Jīva deludes himself in numerous ways, note Vedānta scriptures. Our unreliability to ourselves is almost total, covering thought, word, and deed. In the West this unreliability is startlingly evident in the personal relationships of today. Sensuality seems to be the ruling God of the moment and all methods of serving this God—lies, deception, betrayal—are acceptable so long as they bring gratification.

One sees this in the frequency of adultery in western marriages. This giving in to oneself, this indulgence and lack of restraint is excused and approved of by many who feel 'they are free to do as they choose'. The arrogance of this ignorance demands that one not dwell on the consequences of such actions, be they medical or moral.

The emotional disorders and frenzied, empty life styles offer countless examples of the failure involved in living this way. That no one is happier living this way is both obvious and ignored. The answer given is:

'We'll try it again with someone new, maybe that will bring us joy.' This unending thrill-seeking via sensuality has brought human relationships to a point so low that one wonders if the future can possibly hold greater horrors.

Alas, it probably does. There is a tongue-in-cheek axiom called 'Murphy's Law', which holds that if something can go wrong, it will. History, sad to say, seems to consist entirely of 'Murphy's Law'.

Age is no barrier in such matters. A record number of people in the West are seeking divorces after 20 to 30 years of seemingly contented marriages. Often one or both parties remarry, usually to someone younger, more physically attractive than the discarded mate. No one, it seems, wants to lead 'a limited sexual existence', whatever that is. Fulfilment through sexual encounters has older men seeking out younger women as a means of being young once again.

Older women are marrying or having affairs with younger men, and the vapid minded who pass for western sophisticates cheer this kind of behaviour as one would cheer a tap-dancing elephant. The ridiculous performing the improbable.

Inter-racial marriages and affairs are on the increase in the West. People of different religious backgrounds inter-marry, feeling themselves liberated and free to choose anyone. The meaning of the word freedom is rarely ever discussed. It can mean the right to fail, to be disappointed, to be frustrated, to make mistakes. Such is often the result of worldly 'freedom'.

Few consider that even worldly 'freedom' can mean responsibility, to your own greater good and to the greater good of others. Alas, to many it means merely the freedom to hang oneself, for that is the outcome often enough.

SENSE PLEASURES : BEING YOUNG

In the West, sense pleasures are often equated with being young, and nowhere on God's earth is the mania for keeping young more intense than it is here. An interest in geriatrics has reached the proportions of being an unending craze. Cosmetic surgery, that euphemism for plastic surgery, is at an all time high. Rejuvenation clinics, where the rich and famous come for injections of such allegedly youth-provoking substances as monkey glands and unborn baby lambs, are gold mines for certain doctors.

Being young again is a costly business, financially and in other ways, but the West is ready to pay the price, or so it thinks. Few, however, stop to think that to take the lesser years is always to take the lesser strength and knowledge, at least from a spiritual point of view. But still they munch on the raw, uncooked flesh of animals in a pathetic attempt to make the temporary permanent. One wonders if swallowing unborn baby lamb is not more conducive to bleating for one's mother and running through the pasture on all fours rather than walking briskly up a mountain side.

Emphasizing youthfulness has sensualism as its basis. The object is to attract and be attractive. This obsession with sense pleasures has filled the streets with empty faces which in turn mirror only the emptiest minds and souls.

Even the arts in the West have hit an admitted all time low, with music, literature, painting and films at a most uninteresting level. The West too often mistakes energy for ability, allowing fads, a lack of talent and an abundance of mediocrity to masquerade as worthwhile. While leaping ahead, one wonders about the fate of spirituality, if creativity is being pummelled by time and mores. The mind shapes all things, the hand merely arranges what the mind sees. And if the mind suffers, so must all else.

This emphasis upon sensuality is not

merely immediate gratification gone wild. It also represents a conscious denial of feeling, emotion, tenderness, and consideration. The barren, empty aspects of worldly life are never more visible than in these almost totally physical relationships deliberately sought by young as well as old.

Considering themselves either too wise to love or too wise to go through life without having tasted pleasure, people chase after these relationships, telling themselves and others that it represents an awareness of what life really is.

'We have the answer,' they say. 'There is nothing else but this and we are the smart ones. You have no guarantee of anything beyond what you can touch here and now. Only a fool seeks things in other worlds. To choose gratification is to choose what can be seen, touched, tasted here and now.'

What is wrong with this theory is that the here and now disappears in moments and today turns into tomorrow and into more tomorrows until the tomorrows cease and old age and death become the things you can touch today. Then, the scriptures tell us, we stand to make that great unknown journey. And God will ask us what we did and how did we prepare ourselves for this journey.

In *The Eternal Companion* Swami Brahmananda says:

> 'This life may end at any moment. No one knows when. Equip yourself for the journey with spiritual treasures. To arrive empty-handed at an unknown place involves much suffering and sorrow. Birth is inevitably followed by death. At death you go to an unknown place, so you must prepare yourself for the journey. Always be ready for the great call.'

While no one can ignore the call, most ignore warnings of its impending arrival, at least for a time. So in the West, life goes on with none really and truly feeling he will ever die. Death must therefore be a surprise and a shock for most of us, both before and after the fact. We ignore its existence and in an unending search for pleasure, we continue to chase after that which in the long run we never find.

This tiring and tiresome lunging after pleasure is often a sign that a civilization is in its last stages. History shows this to be true of Rome, of the Babylonians, Assyrians, Persians and the early Egyptians—ancient civilizations that flourished for a time, finally disappearing in the quicksand of immorality. As almost all civilizations do, they died of exhaustion, an exhaustion brought on in large part by weakness stemming from self-indulgence.

They died because they lacked the energy, even the will to survive.

The past and present are closer together than we think. Ortega y Gasset, the philosopher, wrote: 'One age cannot be completely understood if all the others are not understood. The song of history can only be sung as a whole.'

The decline of a civilization, history shows, has never been arrested or reversed.

Death

Along with this frenzied craving for sense pleasures among all ages in the West has come an increase in violence, and not too surprisingly, an increase in suicide particularly among the young. It is perhaps to be expected that souls deadened by over-indulgence, a form of self-destruction, would not think twice about destroying others.

'Those things you practise become strengthened in you,' said a Swami. And those practising killing others can easily be considered ready to kill themselves.

Self-indulgence and a lack of self-respect are synonymous. And since we can give only what we own, those without self-respect can give no respect to others.

Swami Vivekananda has said that for the

sake of our own attachments we are willing to harm others. This can be seen to be all too true in the West, where the insistence is upon pleasure at any cost. This particular extreme, though few see it as such, is a form of self-destruction. Physically, mentally, emotionally, and morally, we pay the piper in the coin of deterioration. And it does not end there.

Eventually something within us rages, then weeps, and we feel a well-earned sense of emptiness and bitter disappointment at having lived so futile an existence. Thus some turn to suicide. It has become part of western folklore in the twentieth century to pass on the stories and names of well-known theatrical and public figures who have felt this emptiness and as a result, taken their own lives.

Personal excess appears to flourish best in a climate of decay and destruction, like toadstools slithering to life in foul, damp darkness. And excess, like toadstools, can kill. While Romans collected 100,000 strong to watch gladiatorial combat to the death, and while some of those cheering the bloodletting also indulged in public sex-relations, the Huns, Vandals, and Goths crept closer to the city's golden gates, forming a noose of sword and dagger around the neck of the once mighty Roman Empire.

The barbarians, so-called, had an ally. That ally was Rome itself, strangling in its own weakness of excess and arrogance.

To be permissive is to be weak, be it with yourself or with others. And as spiritual life strongly emphasizes, weakness is death.

'Progress is the mother of problems,' said Chesterton. Technology is the modern monster, reaching its giant arms from here to the moon, eating up work like giants gobbling victims in myths and fairy tales. Man has less to do, and has turned into a killer because of it. He begins by killing time, and because of this excess time, ends by killing himself in a sad scramble for pleasure and vapid diversion.

Give me leisure time, cried western man and I will build my own utopia. St. Theresa's comment that there was more pain in answered prayers than unanswered prayers was never more applicable to anyone than to western man faced with having his wishes granted. The cry—give me *nothing* to do—soon turns into a lament.

How different from another era, when the poet Goethe, asked why he insisted on working hard day after day, replied: 'I have all eternity to rest.'

Work, leisure, money, possessions, sense pleasures—the repetition, followed by the emptiness continues, and we stumble through life after life infected with this 'fever of eternal dissatisfaction'. In his excellent book *Modern Man in Search of Religion,* Swami Pavitrananda writes:

> 'It is a characteristic of human nature ever to be discontented with the present. Whatver cannot be seen seems beautiful to it. So man always sighs for things gone by, and looks eagerly for things that are coming in the future. But when the future becomes the present, it at once loses all its charm . . . So man is always unhappy, discontented, and dissatisfied.'

The flames of unending cravings are fed by the media—by newspapers, magazines and television. They remind us of what we do not have, of what we might have if we would only grab at it. And so we do. Sometimes we do it morally, often we do it immorally. But by hook or crook, we reach out, never fully realizing that the flames of desire are flames nonetheless, and they burn. And so we suffer, horribly so, often unaware of the intense pain that too often accompanies life.

In *The Eternal Companion,* Swami Brahmananda says: 'Being chained to māyā, man does not realize how great is his suffering as he whirls around on the wheel

of birth and death.'

And in the West, the suffering matches the self-indulgence. Both are gargantuan. Looming as large and as deadly is the problem of addiction. Drugs of all kinds—opiates, tranquillizers, barbiturates, diet pills, questionable medications, are injected or swallowed by the handful in a culture which is close to being totally addicted without being aware of it. Illicit drugs are an obvious, easy-to-condemn target, and deservedly so. The irony stems from the addiction among so-called normal people, who rely upon pills to sleep, awake, to sooth raw nerves, prevent conception, and to lift them from the dark depression brought on by western life.

They too are addicted, and to the cries justifying their particular drug tendencies, George Bernard Shaw has the answer: 'Explanations do not change facts.'

The degree of addiction goes even farther. Sensualism, that modern substitute for just about anything that comes to mind, is as much of an addiction as a hypodermic syringe filled with melted heroin, capable of damaging mind, body, and soul. Perhaps our worst mistake is not to recognize its danger. Like an ancient and once beautiful civilization, we allow the glittering Trojan horse of pleasure to enter our lives. And swiftly, we become victims, slain by our carelessness as much as by the outside enemy.

Historians tell us that many of the strongest castles in ancient times were never conquered by direct attack, but were betrayed from within. A watchman, a soldier guarding the front gate, a citizen terrified for his own safety—these were the betrayers. Always defeat began from within. Supposedly, more than 90% of all European strongholds over the years fell to the enemy in this fashion.

And so it is with us. Our problem is that we are not on guard enough. We take our spiritual enemies too lightly and in underestimating them, we overestimate ourselves. The price of liberty, said Thomas Paine, is eternal vigilance.

Let us stand ready to pay the price. And be free.

MARC OLDEN

NOTES AND COMMENTS

IN THIS NUMBER

Questions and answers are from 'M': *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, translated by Swami Nikhilananda, Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras, 1947. References: Question 1, p. 839-40; Question 2, p. 900.

The words quoted in 'Onward For Ever!' are from *The Complete Works*, Vol. VIII (1959), pp. 30-31.

Man's birth, growth, and decline are an essential aspect of physical phenomena which cannot be circumvented. But is man only a conglomeration of tissues, cells, fibres, and humours? Or something more, something masquerading in a mutable physical disguise, something desperately attempting to look at itself in the body-mind complex? Old age affects the body but the polishing of the mental mirror can be continued notwithstanding ageing. If one can start early in life, it is fine. If not, start

whenever you become aware of life's real goal—may be at sixty or more. There is no age restriction in joining life's course in spiritual education. When Bayazid, a Sufi mystic, was asked how old he was, he replied, 'Four years'. They said, 'How can that be'? He answered, 'I have been veiled from God by the world for seventy years, but I have seen Him during the last four years.' Spiritually speaking, no period of man's life is without significance. The Editorial of the month discusses the problems of ageing in modern times and suggests solutions from the spiritual standpoint.

Rationalists fervently believe that science holds the key for unlocking the cosmic mystery. They are convinced that some time in the future—maybe centuries hence—science is going to lay bare the secret of the whole universe. But Vedāntic philosophers declare that that is naive and wishful thinking. Science, however developed it may become, will still be within the sphere of māyā because science is only a product of māyā's product, namely, the human mind. The key to the cosmic mystery—which is the same as one's own mystery—lies within one's spiritual Self. And science can never tell us about this or show the way to it. By knowing the Self, the Vedāntic teachers tell us in ringing phrases, a person solves the mystery of life and existence.

'Why We Are What We Are' by Swami Ashokananda, a former Editor of the *Prabuddha Bharata* and for many years the head of the Vedanta Society of Northern California, San Francisco, is a lucid analysis of infinite man's anomalous finitude. We hope our readers will appreciate the clarity with which some of the fundamental concepts of Vedānta relating to man's relative existence are explained here, and the spiritual insights about the *jñānī* or man of knowledge that the exposition contains.

This was originally delivered by the Swami as one of a series of eight lectures on the Origin and Destiny of Man at the Vedanta Society's Old Temple in San Francisco on Sunday, 15 March 1953. We are grateful to the authorities of the Vedanta Society for making this fine lecture available to the readers of the *Prabuddha Bharata*. The second and concluding instalment will be published in our next number.

Undoubtedly, human society moves in successive cycles of regeneration and degeneration. Careful students of history and ancient literature will not fail to perceive at present serious signs of degeneration everywhere in human societies, especially in the powerful and affluent western nations. Though this will appear to be an inevitable and irreversible course, sane and serious-minded men and women can stand firm against this trend and check the downward course. In 'Something of Value is Missing' Mr. Marc Olden analyses some of the spreading sociological maladies of the western societies, especially America, and implies remedies in tune with ethical and spiritual teachings. Mr. Marc Olden is well known to our readers by now and we are sure that his contributions to 'Human Trends' are very much appreciated by them for their clear and powerful analysis and articulate expression.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES

ESSENCE OF MODERN MANAGEMENT—THE ART OF RAISING THE STANDARD OF LIVING: By N. H. Atthreya, Published by M. M. C. School of Management, Bombay-20, 1972, pp. 240; Price: Library edition, Rs. 19.50 (or U.S. $4.00 outside India); Student edition, Rs. 15.00.

Here is a neat book, indeed. It is well suited to meet the requirements of management, teachers and students, and other men of public affairs who have little time to pore over bulky tomes. 'Obesity is a sin even for books', is an implied declaration of the *Essence of Modern Management*.

The presentation is unique. It creates an impression that the book is a piece of poetry, which it is not. The pages that carry R. K. Laxman's cartoons are by far the best portion of the book, revealing as they do an incisive insight into problems and things which we face in our everyday life. This is not of course to belittle the importance of the contribution by the author himself.

How to make the best use of the human and material resources that we possess so as to speed up the process of production and improve the quality of goods and services, is a problem which assumes great importance in the context of a galloping inflation which threatens our economy today with dire consequences. Development itself is in danger of grinding to a halt. It is a real challenge to the top management in every sphere of economic activity. Sri Attreya examines the requirements for removing the hurdles in terms of improvement of managerial efficiency. The professionals may feel that the present book is all too familiar, but the lay public may benefit by reading through these pages to know the 'alibis' generally offered for the state of disarray and disorder in which we are so badly enmeshed today, in terms of managerial drawbacks and administrative shortcomings. The author's suggested stock remedy is, 'Manage your things well. That is all that you need learn!'

Sri H. G. Kulkarni

PHILOSOPHY AND FREEDOM: By Heydar Reghaby, Published by Philosophical Library, 15 E. 40th St., New York, 10016, 1970, pp. 87, $3.75.

This small book is in seven chapters. Its general aim is to show that man is nothing if he is not a free being. After discussing some preliminary questions in the first chapter, the author deals with academic freedom in the second. This, says the author, is the foundation of all other freedoms. In essence it means the freedom of the human mind and reason. If academic institutions like colleges and universities are brought under political or ecclesiastical control, it means the enslavement of society as a whole. In the next chapter, the author has some interesting observations to make on student unrest. The academic conscience, says the author, is the conscience of humanity. That is why students rise in revolt against injustice and oppression wherever they may exist. French, British, German and Japanese students engage themselves in protest marches against the U.S. policy in Vietnam. 'The internationalization of oppression invokes an internationalization of opposition.' The author says that the student community has one basic aim, namely, universal freedom. May we add that the student community in engaging itself in these wider causes is losing sight of its main and immediate objective, namely the acquisition of useful knowledge. Chapter four makes out that there is an inherent opposition between religion and philosophy because the former is based on blind faith while the latter is based on reason. Religion is therefore bound to be replaced by philosophy. Here again we may add that though reason is superior to blind faith, it is not in necessary opposition to faith as such. There are very definite limits to the operation of reason. We have necessarily to believe where we cannot prove. Nothing worthy of proof has been proven.

That freedom is the life-breath of art is made out in chapter five. In the concluding chapter the author refers to the recent researches in space which have made man aware of his finitude more than ever before. To overcome this feeling of finitude he seeks the help of religion and mysticism which assure him that he is not a finite entity but one with the Infinite. But our author thinks that this is mere delusion. He is of the opinion that nothing is gained by man's identifying himself with the Infinite which is insentient. And further he cannot sell away his individuality for this doubtful benefit. Instead of going to religion and mysticism, man will do well to realize that he is endowed with consciousness and consequently is able to comprehend nature, however vast it may be.

This last statement is perhaps truer than the author knows. Is it not possible to visualize this consciousness as the Infinite of which religion and mysticism speak? The conscious element in man stands aloof, illumining every state of his mind. It enjoys real freedom inasmuch as it is not subject to limitation of any kind. When it rises

above all the limitations that are falsely superimposed on it, it shines as the Infinite Consciousness. All other freedoms that we enjoy are only faint reflections of this unlimited freedom.

SRI M. K. VENKATARAMA IYER

INDIA AND WORLD CULTURE: BY VINAYAK KRISHNA GOKAK, Vikas Publications: 5 Daryaganj, Ansari Rd., Delhi-6, 1972, pp. 134, Rs. 22/-.

Because the same term 'culture' is used by many scholars to connote the mental *process* and also to denote the *end product* of that process, there is general confusion all round in respect of the correct meaning of 'culture'. The brochure under review has not escaped this confusion. However, there are flashes of insight into the true nature of culture on pages 2, 3, and 5. The author is aware that culture is, in fact, cultivation of the mind and its faculties. But then, what is the composition or constitution of the mind whose faculties are to be cultivated to yield culture? What are the steps or stages in the hierarchy of values which culture yields. What is the supreme or sovereign value which confers unity on the diverse components of the value-hierarchy? How does the assimilation of such a value system confer unity on human personality? One looks in vain in the brochure under review for answers. But we need not be surprised, for only in a psycho-philosophical exposition of culture could one find answers to our questions, and the author's concern is not philosophy—it is certainly not psychology—but literature, positive science, politics, and society. Still the brochure is of great interest to the student of culture. After all, Sri Aurobindo's philosophy is there. Almost in the middle of this thin volume there is a clear differentiation of Eastern and Western culture, and thereafter we get short studies of Indian culture from the ancient to modern times. The concluding chapter tries to show that Indian culture comes of age in the Aurovillean concept of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy.

The brochure is excellent as far as it goes, but the reviewer has a very uncomfortable feeling that something is lacking. On the vast canvas on which the image of culture is to be presented, the author has but drawn dots and dashes, curves and contours, and strokes and segments. These have to be poured into a perfect mould and a vigorous image of culture taken out. And this unique mould, as the reviewer sees it, could come only from Vedanta and not from literature, science, or art.

For a thin volume of this type, the price charged is far too great.

PROF. P. S. NAIDU

SANSKRIT AND MAHARASHTRA—A SYMPOSIUM: EDITED BY PROF. R. N. DANDEKAR, University of Poona, Poona, 1972, pp. 139, Price Not Mentioned.

Sanskrit has been a unifying force in India during the last fifty centuries or more. Every part of the country made its own contribution to the development of Indian culture and thought through the medium of Sanskrit. Generally speaking the authors never cared to tell us what their mother tongue was. Only in recent times we have begun to assert our linguistic identity. Moreover, in the absence of definite evidence several parts of the country have begun to claim the same author as a product of their areas.

In this situation it is heartening to come across the present work which offers an account of the contribution of Maharashtra to Sanskrit, without voicing any dogmatic claims. Here is a brief survey of the contributions made by the scholars hailing from Maharashtra in the fields of Veda, Grammar, Epics and *Puranas, Dharma-Sastras, Darsanas,* Poetics Music, Medicine, Astronomy, and Creative literature. The second part of the text presents an account of the influence of Sanskrit on the language, literature, and thought of Maharashtra.

There are some controversial statements which need to be corrected in this cooperative venture. 'Baudhayana-sakha' is assigned to Andhra Pradesh (p. 3), instead of the 'Apastamba-sakha'. Bhattoji Dikshita is admitted to be either an Andhra or a Maharashtrian (p. 19) and yet is treated as a Maharashtrian. Kondabhatta was from Andhra. Amalananda, as we find from Kalpataru and from Abhoga and as we notice from his literal renderings of some Telugu proverbs, cannot be treated as a Maharashtrian (p. 38). We cannot accept the equation of Ramagiri with Ramtek (p. 62); nor can we accept the identification of Umveka with Bhavabhuti (p. 36). Raghavabhatta (p. 65) who was very familiar with Kumaragiri cannot be claimed as a Maharashtrian. Sridhara Venkatesa (p. 67) was not a Maharashtrian, as the first name refers to his family name.

These remarks do not belittle the value of the text. It is a pioneering work and it deserves a careful study.

DR. P. S. SASTRI

NEWS AND REPORTS

SRI RAMAKRISHNA ADVAITA ASHRAMA KALADY

REPORT FOR APRIL 1969—MARCH 1972

Founded at the birthplace of Sri Sankaracharya, in the Centenary year of Sri Ramakrishna, by Swami Agamananda, who vigorously developed its activities till his death in 1961. At present these activities include:

Schools: Brahmanandodayam Sanskrit School (Upper Primary) with twelve divisions, and 486 students; High School, with 14 divisions and 546 students; Junior Basic School with 8 divisions and 296 students. Of these, Sanskrit is 'first language' in the first-named and optional in the second. Salaries are paid by Education Department of Kerala; education is free up to the tenth standard.

Sri Ramakrishna Gurukulam & Tribal Hostel, with 126 students (62 free) all of whom live with and are guided by the monks and teachers.

Sri Sarada Ayurveda Vaidya Mandiram (Dispensary) with attached Emergency Ward. In 1971-72 (12 mos.) 3318 patients were treated. More than 40% of the patients were either Moslem or Christian.

Social Education Scheme of Government of India constructed an Auditorium-cum-Library, of which the Auditorium holds nearly 800 and is used for all functions of Ashrama and Schools. The Library with 6657 volumes is likewise open to all, including the Public.

Swami Vivekananda Library with over 2000 select volumes in five Indian languages as well as English, is mainly for Ashrama inmates and the Publication Department.

Publication Department during the three years under review published five new books, all on basic texts of Hindu religion, as well as three Reprints of similar nature.

Puja and Festivals. Daily *puja* is conducted in the Ashrama shrine with food offerings, including worship to Lord Siva in the permanent Siva Lingam. Special worships are conducted on birthdays of the great Avatars and Teachers, and the major festival-days are fittingly observed. Birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother, Swamiji, and Sankaracharya were celebrated in April-May in a grand way.

Spiritual Training and Preaching. Beside careful training of novices and brahmacharis, the Ashrama conducted religious classes on Sundays in the Hostel, the Ashrama, and the Krishna Temple, Alwaye. The monks also went out on invitation for preaching in nearby temples and conferences.

New Temple Scheme: Inasmuch as daily worship has since 1936 been done in a small room of the old building, plans for a Temple have now gone far towards completion. Foundation and basement work have been completed at cost of Rs. 91,662, and work is continuing steadily. At time of writing, over Rs. 1,42,000 had already been raised for the project.

Immediate Needs: (1) *Temple Fund* (to complete the construction) —Rs. 1,50,000/-; (2) *Monastic quarters*, Kitchen Dining Hall—Rs. 50,000/-; (3) *Dairy Development Fund*: Rs. 25,000/-; (4) *Poor-Boys' Annual Maintenance Fund*: Rs. 10,000/-; (5) *Library Fund*: Rs. 5,000/-; (6) *Publication Fund*: Rs. 5,000/-; (7) *Dispensary Fund*: Rs. 5,000/-.

RAMAKRISHNA-VIVEKANANDA
AND
VEDANTA LITERATURE

BOOKS ON SRI RAMAKRISHNA

Price

* Life of Sri Ramakrishna
Foreword by Mahatma Gandhi
Limp Bound: 11·00
De Luxe: 16·00

* The Life of Ramakrishna
By Romain Rolland 5·75

* A Short Life of Sri Ramakrishna 1·50

Sri Ramakrishna And His Mission—By Swami Ramakrishnananda 0·62

* Sri Ramakrishna And Swami Vivekananda—By Jawaharlal Nehru 0·60

* Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna 5·00
De Luxe 7·00

Sayings of Sri Ramakrishna 6·00

* My Master—By Swami Vivekananda 0·70

* Ramakrishna and His Message —By Swami Vivekananda 2·00

* Ramakrishna And His Disciples—By Christopher Isherwood 12·50

Sri Ramakrishna The Great Master 30·00

The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna 5·00

Ramakrishna Upanishad By C. Rajagopalachari 1·50

Tales And Parables of Sri Ramakrishna 5·00

Words of the Master *Compiled* By Swami Brahmananda
Board: 1·25
Cloth: 2·00

* The Apostles of Sri Ramakrishna 9·00

BOOKS ON HOLY MOTHER

Price

Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi—By Swami Gambhirananda
Board: 12·50
Cloth: 14·00

Sri Sarada Devi The Holy Mother—By Swami Tapasyananda & Swami Nikhilananda
Board: 12·00
Cloth: 13·50

Holy Jairambati
By Swami Tejasananda 1·25

* The Message of Holy Mother 0·30

WORKS ON AND OF SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

* The Life of Vivekananda And The Universal Gospel—By Romain Rolland 6·25

* Vivekananda (A Biography) By Swami Nikhilananda
Paperback 3·50
De Luxe 6·25

The Master As I Saw Him—By Sister Nivedita 7·00

* The Story of Vivekananda (illustrated for children) 4·50

* A Short Life of Swami Vivekananda 1·50

* Swamiji and His Message —By Sister Nivedita 1·20

* The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda (In Eight Volumes)
Per Vol. Board: 9·00
Cloth: 12·50
Per Set. Board: 70·00
Cloth: 96·00

		Price
* Raja Yoga	Board :	3·50
	Cloth :	5·75
* Bhakti Yoga	Board :	1·25
	Cloth :	3·00
* Karma Yoga	Board :	1·25
	Cloth :	3·00
* Jnana Yoga	Board :	4·50
	Cloth :	7·00
* Selections From Swami Vivekananda		9·00
* Lectures from Colombo to Almora		5·50
* Swamiji's Message to A Disciple		4·50
* Chicago Addresses		0·75
* Modern India		0·80
* The East and the West		2·00
* Practical Vedanta		1·25
* My Life and Mission		0·60
* In Defence of Hinduism		0·65
* Essentials of Hinduism		0·75
* Teachings of Swami Vivekananda	Cloth :	7·00
	Board :	5·00
* Letters of Swami Vivekananda		8·50
* To the Youth of India		2·00
* Caste, Culture, and Socialism		1·50
* In Search of God and Other Poems		3·00
* Advaita Vedanta		0·80
* Thoughts on the Gita		1·00
* Sadhanas or Preparations for Higher Life		0·50
* Thoughts of Power		0·50
* Work and Its Secret		0·60
* The Powers of the Mind		0·50
* Bhakti or Devotion		1·00
* Life After Death		0·60
* Is Vedanta the Future Religion		0·60
* Our Women		0·90
* Memoirs of European Travel		1·75
* Swami Vivekananda on India and Her Problems		1·75
Vedanta Philosophy		1·50
Hinduism		1·50
Education		2·00

		Price
Women of India		0·25
Inspired Talks	Paper :	3·00
	Cloth :	4·00
* Swami Vivekananda in America : New Discoveries		18·00
* Reminiscences of Swami Vivekananda		7·50
* Swami Vivekananda Birth Centenary Commemoration Volume		30·00
Vivekananda : His Call to the Nation		0·50
* Parliament of Religions		18·00
Six Lessons on Raja-Yoga		0·75
Realisation and Its Methods		2·00

SANSKRIT WORKS WITH ENGLISH TRANSLATION

* Shrimad-Bhagavad-Gita—By Swami Swarupananda		9·00
* Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (With Shankara's Commentary)—By Swami Madhavananda		14·00
* Eight Upanishads—Vol. I (With Shankara's Commentary)—By Swami Gambhirananda		9·00
* —do— (in press)	Vol. II	8·50
* Minor Upanishads—By Swami Madhavananda		2·00
* Bhasa-Pariccheda with Siddhanta-Muktavali—By Swami Madhavananda		4·00
* Ashtavakra Samhita—By Swami Nityaswarupananda	Paper :	4·00
	Cloth :	5·00
* Aparokshanubhuti or Self-Realization of Shankaracharya		2·00
* Vedantasara of Sadananda	Paper :	2·75
	Cloth :	4·00
* Altar Flowers	Paper :	3·75
	Cloth :	5·00



Editor : SWAMI BUDHANANDA, Joint Editor : SWAMI TADRUPANANDA
Printed by SWAMI SMARANANANDA at General Printers & Publishers (Pvt.) Ltd., 119 Dharamtolla St., Cal. 13
and Published by him for Advaita Ashrama (Mayavati) from 5 Dehi Entally Road, Calcutta 700014
on September 1, 1973.
Cover & Art Plates Printed by Sun Lithographing Co., Calcutta 10

Phone : 44-2898 Registered No. C - 3780

Annual Subscription : India, Burma, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka - Rupees Eight, U. S. A. - Four Dollars, Other countries £ 1·00, Single Copy : Inland - 75 P.

SUN LITHO